

## **Will there be few that are saved?**

**Intro: Religious pollsters have long confirmed that most people who believe in God and in heaven expect to go there. In 1991 a Gallup poll showed that 78 percent of Americans expect to go to heaven when they die. (Gallup Poll)**

**Ironically many who believe in heaven do not believe in hell, though Jesus mentioned it more often than heaven. A USA Today poll revealed few years ago that 67% of American adults believe in a hell. But less than 25% believe they will go there, while 25% believe their friends will be there. (USA Today poll, 12-86)**

**I wonder what you would say if I could ask you about that question?**

**Our views are not that different I don't think from the way the people in Jesus' day thought. Most Jews, for example, thought that virtually all of them would be saved, except for a few of the worst sinners. And this attitude may have prompted the question asked of Jesus in Luke 13: "Are there few who are being saved?"**

**Jesus' answer was truly revealing and helps us understand some things about the nature of the eternal kingdom (Read v. 22-31). Consider some of the things Jesus taught in this short discourse.**

### **The eternal kingdom will be like a joyous feast prepared by God for those whom He knows.**

In this paragraph Jesus pulls away the curtain that obscures the future and gives us a glimpse of the kingdom in its culminating form. He likens the eternal kingdom to a great feast conducted by God for those whom He knows. It will be the banquet of the ages!

This figure, perhaps derived from the wedding feast, suggests the joy and wonderful provision of God for His people as they enter His house for celebration that will last for all eternity!

### **Heroes of old will be raised to enjoy this great feast of God.**

He pictures all the great heroes of faith of ages past being there, men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the prophets.

Jesus language implies a general resurrection of all the righteous dead. A part of the joy of being present will be to see and talk to the great heroes of faith of ages past and to be associated and identified with them.

### **Many others will enter from all parts of the world.**

In addition, he pictures many others who come from every direction, who also gain admittance to the celebrations. Perhaps these represent Gentile peoples who will have prepared for the celebrations.

They will "recline" means they will partake of the heavenly banquet God has provided (Reclining was the customary posture of eating in the ancient world).

So far the picture of one of hope and comfort. What a day of rejoicing that will be when all God's people come into His presence! But there is also a word of warning!

**The door to the feast will be closed to the "unknown".**

The closing of the door symbolizes that fact that the door into the kingdom is open for but a time and then the time will come when no one can enter.

Do you notice that at the judgment there will be no atheists? There won't be a single person there who will not be interested in going to heaven? There will be no one at the judgment who will not want to get into the Lord's heavenly feast. But then it will be too late.

**Those outside will want to enter and not be able.**

They shall try to remind the Lord that they were present at places where he went to eat and that He taught in their cities. But Jesus makes it clear that we cannot depend upon superficial connections with the Lord to get us to heaven. His answer is interesting: "I do not recognize you; depart from me, all you evildoers." Jesus words may shock the good moral person. Surely, Jesus would not refer to me in that way! But if we have turned a deaf ear to the invitation of the gospel, how good can we profess to be????

Instead entrance into the kingdom belongs to those who the Lord knows! He certainly knows who His people are! He knows who has obeyed His gospel and entered into His kingdom.

**There will be great weeping and gnashing of teeth on the part of those who do not get to go into the heavenly celebration.**

No one likes to be left out; but truly those who have neglected the opportunities to enter the kingdom now will be left out.

There will be weeping (loud crying) and gnashing of teeth (a gesture of anger or frustration). These are pictures of great pain and distress; and they call upon us to seriously consider where we stand with God.

**We must enter by the narrow door.**

We must recognize that the way into the heavenly celebrations is restricted and narrow. There is but one way to enter, one door!; and that door is "narrow".

Let me tell you a little more about that narrow door! The way into the kingdom of God has been made possible through the grace of God. Sinners cannot pass through that way with their sins; they must be cleansed by the sacrifice of Jesus. And that cleansing takes place when one hears and accepts the terms of the gospel.

**Faith**  
**Repentance**

**Confession**  
**Baptism**  
**Continue to live of life of faith and growth**

**We must strive to enter into the kingdom.**

We cannot treat our entrance into the kingdom, casually or with indifference. Instead we must work at it. (Agonizomai) It was the word use in Greek to describe a person “competing in the Games”. It is the word from which we get the word “agonize”.

Jesus by this word is telling us that entering the kingdom takes earnest effort!

Sometimes I hear about people who really want to hear a certain music group and knowing that tickets are for sale they will sleep overnight nearby so that when the ticket booth opens they will be able to buy a ticket. And then the day of the concert they will be there early to stand in line and gain entrance to the auditorium where the concert will take place.

Some people will have put more effort into seeing their favorite rock star or their favorite football team than entering the eternal kingdom of God.

**The last shall be first and the first last.**

The Last refers to those who were far from the kingdom (the Gentiles), unaware of its blessings and privileges but who upon learning of them were eager to seize the opportunity afforded to them.

The first refer to the Jews who enjoyed every advantage but did not make us of it. These will be last and thus unable to enter.

I think about the wonderful privilege we have to hear the gospel so readily and how many take that for granted. They postpone obedience to the Lord because they "know" there will be other times and opportunities. I wonder today if those Americans I mentioned who were surveyed ever consider these words of the Lord: “Some who are last will be first and some who are first will be last”. Today in Communist China, in Viet Nam, and other places people risk their lives to sit at the feet of a gospel preacher. They have seized the moment to obey Jesus Christ and enter His kingdom while many Americans sit comfortably in indifference to the gospel call! “That door will not close on me!” Don’t let that happen to you!

**Conclusion:** Did Jesus ever answer the question, "Are there few being saved"? In a way he did. He said "many" would seek to enter and not be able. But, what Jesus really did was challenge his audience to be more concerned not about how many but whether they were one of them. “Are there few that are saved” is more than an interesting academic question; it is the question of a lifetime for each of us!

Are we striving to enter the kingdom while the opportunity is afforded us?

