

I love the theoretical realm. If you were to look at my Clifton Strengths Finder Profile, you would see that my top two strengths are intellection and ideation. For those of you who might be more familiar with the Myers-Briggs Profile, I am an INTP. My love of the theoretical realm explains why I know both of these.

I'm the kind of person you want to consult for an accurate prediction of what would happen if you pitted Batman against Superman. The movie got it wrong, by the way. The fact that both are fictional characters does not matter to me. I will gather the relevant strengths of each, and all you need to do is tell me where the battle is taking place, and I can tell you how it will unfold.

There are, of course, better uses of theoretical thinking. Albert Einstein figured out the relationship between matter and energy in the theoretical realm. The global impact of a one degree rise in the surface temperature of the ocean is a theoretical question. "Will only a few be saved?" is a theoretical question.

Yes, I can identify with the person in the crowd who asked Jesus if only a few would be saved. There are plenty of people today who can identify with that person. People ask a variant on this all the time. What about the person in a high mountain village who has never heard the gospel of Christ? Can they be saved? What about the person who has only heard a caricature of the gospel, and has rejected it? Can they be saved? I've heard these, and more questions that are very similar to the question, "Will only a few be saved?"

Sometimes, the answers to theoretical questions are not what we need. Do you really want a theoretical answer to the question, "Will the plane I've just boarded fly?" or, "Will this bridge hold me?" No, you want an engineer to answer that question. You want someone who can apply the theories of physics to the real world to tell you if you are safe when you trust that airplane or that bridge.

When Jesus was asked, "Will only a few be saved?" he refused to give a theoretical answer. He responded by saying, "You need to make sure that you are saved." By extension, I suppose we could also say that we need to make sure that we are offering the sure and certain hope of salvation to the world rather than hoping for the best for that person who has only heard a caricature of the gospel.

Jesus went on to say something that might be very disturbing. He said, "Struggle to get in by the narrow gate...There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all of the prophets in God's Kingdom, and you yourselves thrown out. People will come from north and south, east and west, and sit down to feast in God's Kingdom."

Narrow gate? How could Jesus be so narrow?

First, it's important to note that Jesus equated salvation with the Kingdom of God. It's not a democracy or a republic, but a kingdom. To be part of a kingdom, you have to give your allegiance to the king.

Some of the people who heard Jesus' teaching liked to listen to him. They liked the healings he performed. They liked it when Jesus fed them. Even Herod fell into that crowd. When Jesus was brought before Herod, Herod was hoping to see Jesus perform some sign. Herod was in no way ready to say that Jesus was his King.

There was recently an article in the Babylon Bee, a satirical publication, that quoted a person as saying: "Christian—I've got a challenge for you. A very simple request. Just show me some evidence. That's all I ask. Show me some clear, undeniable evidence that God's opinions about everything are identical to mine. Do that and I will gladly believe in your God and commit my life to him. If you can't prove to me that literally none of God's thoughts, words, or actions from eternity past until now would bother me, agitate me, or make me uncomfortable in any way, then why are we still talking? What's the point?"

That was a satirical article, but it does reflect the spirit of the day. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say it reflects the spirit of a fallen humanity. We are seeking eternal life on our own terms. We want salvation to be something that makes life what we think life should be. We might even be happy to allow for a vote on what it looks like.

That is not salvation. We don't need a king who agrees with everything we think. We need a king who will tell us what is true and what is right. We don't need a God that reflects our image back to us. We need the God who created us in His image to restore us to that image. That is salvation. That is eternal life.

Is there something that keeps you from allowing Jesus to be your king? Is there some belief you hold, that if Jesus said you are wrong, would cause you to reject his authority over you? Is there some behavior or habit you hold dear that you would rather hold on to than acknowledging to Jesus that it is wrong?

Strive to enter by the narrow gate. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. He alone is the way to salvation. Acknowledging that he is the Lord leads to eternal life. We might falter in our obedience. We may not always order our lives as he has commanded. When we do, there is forgiveness of sins for all who turn to him. However, if we choose disobedience, if we refuse to say that he is right and we have been wrong, then we are seeking something other than eternal life.

So, what about the person who has never heard of Jesus, or the person who has rejected a false presentation of the gospel? Will only a few be saved? I cannot answer such questions with confidence. I can theorize about the answers based on what I know of God's nature. All I can say with certainty is this. Salvation is found in the Kingdom of God alone, and the way in is to acknowledge that Jesus is the Lord. So, strive to enter through the narrow gate.

