

# Salvation in No Other Name

*“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).*

It is commonly believed in our times that all religions are able to show us a path to a spiritual relationship with God. There are variations of expression and terminology in the details of this belief, but the foundational teaching is that all religions are equally acceptable to God. The idea that there are many valid religions, and many ways to experience a meaningful and/or saving relationship with God, is called *Pluralism*. The belief that God loves everyone and will accept and/or save all mankind is known as *Universalism*. And a third element, *Skepticism*, teaches that we cannot know anything about God, truth, or salvation, with such absolute certainty that we could label any religion as false. These three beliefs are often blended together into one philosophy of life or one religion.

It is somewhat difficult to precisely define these belief systems since they purposely seek to avoid absolute creedal statements. The Skeptic, for example, pretends not to assert anything for sure about salvation, except that *nothing* is for sure. Essentially all three beliefs mentioned above are *skeptical* of the absolute truth of salvation through Jesus Christ alone. Therefore, for sake of simplicity, we will refer to a Pluralist or a Universalist as a *Skeptic* throughout this article.

The Apostle’s statement to the Jewish Council in Acts 4:12 which declares that there is no Name other than Jesus Christ under Heaven whereby we can be saved, stands in direct opposition to the skeptical thinking of our culture. The Christian can therefore expect to encounter strong objections to the New Testament teaching of salvation. The exclusive nature of the Gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ alone was resented by Jews and Gentiles in the Apostles’ era as well.

Skeptics profess to deny all *absolute* truth about salvation, yet they will say that the Christian belief in one way of salvation is *absolutely* wrong. So we point out that unless there is such a thing as “absolute truth,” their denial of it cannot be an “absolutely true” statement either! It is important to note this foundational logical inconsistency of Skepticism.

Before we further address the Skeptic’s objections, let us notice other Scriptures which also teach Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation, beginning with Jesus’ own words:

*“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: **no man cometh unto the Father, but by me**” (John 14:6).*

*“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; **but he that believeth not shall be damned**” (Mark 16:15-16).*

The Apostle Paul says: *“For there is one God, and **one mediator** between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).*

In light of the verses cited above it is evident that the Apostle's declaration to the Jewish Council is consistent with the message of the New Testament. In short, if there were other ways whereby God offers salvation, then it would not have been necessary for Jesus to have been crucified. Let us now examine **three of the main objections** which Skeptics make against the exclusive claims of the Gospel.

**Objection 1—All religions are equally valid and it is arrogant and bigoted to exclusively insist that salvation is through Jesus Christ alone.**

We note that Islam also makes exclusive claims about their faith and rejects other faiths as false. On this basis Islam would also need to be rejected if Christianity is to be rejected.

Secondly, if all religions are equally valid, then Christianity is also equally valid when it declares that there is salvation in no other Name. In fact this objection of the Skeptic is also exclusive, for it excludes the faiths which teach one way to God as being valid.

Using the same logic of the Skeptic, we can reply that it is equally arrogant to insist that others believe that all religions **are** equally valid, as to insist that all religions are **not** equally valid. The Skeptic is essentially saying that **it is arrogant** to believe in both truth and error, but **it is not arrogant** to insist that all religions are equally true, even when those religions contradict one another. In reality, the Skeptic is declaring that no one can know any truth for sure, other than that all religions are true. We might ask the Skeptic, "How do you know for sure that **all** faiths are valid, when you reject ours?"

**Objection 2—Belief in salvation through Jesus Christ alone motivates persecution against other religions.**

We acknowledge that there have been professing Christian groups throughout history that have persecuted people of other faiths in the Name of Jesus. We also acknowledge that professing Christian groups have persecuted one another in Jesus' Name. We also would like to point out that many other faiths have persecuted Christians for confessing Jesus' Name. Some of the greatest persecutors of the Christians have been pagan Roman Emperors who were Pluralists (they believed that all contemporary religions were valid except those which were exclusive such as Judaism and Christianity). Other persecutors of Christians have been irreligious Atheists (such as the Communists and Fascists). The point here is that other religions, Atheism, and Pluralism have all motivated persecution against Christians at different times in history. The sin of persecution has infected people of all professing faiths and persuasions. Therefore Pluralism/Skepticism is not the answer to religious persecution, since those beliefs have motivated some of the greatest religious persecution. Persecution stems from either a heart of hatred or misguided zeal for truth that is not properly tempered with love.

The real question for the Skeptic to consider is this: "Does the Bible indicate that Jesus or His Apostles persecuted or taught persecution in Jesus' Name against other people who did not accept the Gospel?" A faith must be evaluated on the basis of what its **founders** taught, not merely on the basis of what some later followers did in Jesus' Name.

Consider the following Biblical statements:

*“For God so **loved** the world, that he gave his only begotten Son . . .” (John 3:16a).*

*“ . . . God is **love**” (1 John 4:8b).*

*“But I say unto you, **Love your enemies**, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).*

*“ . . . Love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39b).*

*“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12).*

Would a fair evaluation and application of these absolute statements about God’s love motivate us to persecute, or to love, another person? If we reject the absolutes of God’s truth about Jesus Christ, upon what basis can we be assured of the absolute of God’s universal love for humanity? It is a rhetorical question, because if we reject all absolute truth about salvation through Jesus Christ, we also reject the absolute truth of God’s unconditional love. The fact of the matter is that many Christians since New Testament times have taken these Biblical statements seriously. They have loved their neighbors who were of a different faith and in many cases have returned good for evil. There have been many Christians who would rather suffer wrong than persecute another to promote the right. Why? Because they take seriously the absolute truth of God’s Word to love even their enemies, and they have done so in the Name of Jesus Christ.

### **Objection 3—How can a loving God damn people to Hell who have never heard about salvation through Jesus Christ?**

This objection constitutes one of the strongest arguments of the Skeptic against the exclusive claims of the Gospel. Many Christians have also been troubled by concern for those who have never heard the Gospel, and wonder how God will judge them. The Scriptures anticipate this concern for the heathen by asking, “How shall they hear without a preacher?”

First of all, let’s consider whether a loving God is just in damning or punishing those individuals whom most moral people would consider reprehensibly wicked. Would we expect God to reward individuals who inflicted so much evil upon others with a blissful eternity in Heaven? The justice systems in benevolent nations recognize that the government’s role is to punish the evildoer and encourage and reward good moral or ethical behavior. Why would we expect the justice of God to operate differently, when He tells us in His Word that He has ordained this role of justice for human government?

Both common sense and our natural understanding of human justice tell us that unconditional love must be balanced with justice and punishment of evil in order to have a well-ordered family or society. Otherwise, unconditional love without justice becomes an aid to evil. Could we watch atrocities committed against innocent people and justly say that God should love and forgive the perpetrators in spite of their sins, even if they *persist* in evil? Any loving or caring witness of atrocities would cry out against such an unjust love. So also, we must recognize that in order for God to be good and loving, He **must** punish evil.

If we accept the Biblical absolutes of love and justice, we need to carefully consider also what it says about sin and salvation. The message of the Gospel is that all men are *born* sinners and fall short of the requirements of God's moral standard. We do not need to teach our children to be selfish, because that is their *natural* tendency. It is because of everyone's *natural* desire to sin that God calls all humanity to believe the Gospel and be saved from sin by Jesus Christ. Our good works cannot save us from being sinners. Even when we perform good works, our hearts can be proud and seeking praise from others. Good works, while being beneficial to others, cannot free us from our naturally sinful hearts, nor earn salvation for us.

An illustration would be that of newborn children trying to earn (or merit) the love of their mothers so they will care for them. We all need unconditional and unmerited love at birth. The infant's life depends on the mother's gracious and unconditional love. But when the child gets older he will either willfully accept or reject that love, when it is expressed in the form of guidance and nurture. So it is with our heavenly Father—all mankind is born into this world under His unconditional love (infants are reckoned by Christ as being of the kingdom). But as they grow older, people will accept or reject the love of God that comes to them through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the manifestation of God's love and His plan of salvation for sinful man.

*"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"*  
(Romans 5:8).

Sometimes people then wonder how saints were saved before Christ died—specifically in the Old Testament era. Hebrews 11:13 says: *"These all died in **faith**, not having received the promises, but **having seen them afar off**, and **were persuaded of them**, and **embraced them**, and **confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.**"*

The Old Testament saints were saved the same as we are—by faith in the promise of salvation through Christ. Their faith looked **forward** to the Cross while ours looks **back** to the Cross—but all saints have been saved by Christ's death on the Cross. The Old Testament saints were not saved by animal sacrifices; those sacrifices only typified their need of pardon and foreshadowed the Cross. Note Hebrews 10:4, *"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."*

Let us note also that God has given divine aids whereby all people are drawn to Him through Jesus Christ.

a. All human beings have a degree of light from Jesus Christ: *"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"* (John 1:9).

b. The teaching grace of God is at work in every heart leading individuals toward Christ. *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us . . ."* (Titus 2:11-12a).

c. God has given a conscience even to the heathen, to lead them to the truth. *"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their*

*conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another” (Romans 2:14-15).*

d. The Scripture indicates that God will provide answers for those who are seeking the truth. *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Matthew 7:7-8).*

The verses cited above strongly indicate that God is calling all people to salvation through various means. Additionally, Jesus commissioned the Church to take the Gospel into the whole world. The Apostles and early Christians spread the Word of Jesus Christ through the whole civilized world and much of the barbaric world of that time. This world evangelism converted many pagans and eventually brought the Gospel into contact with other major world religions. Some of them recognize Jesus Christ as Prophet or Savior in their sacred writings. It is therefore not entirely accurate to assume that there are vast multitudes of people who are totally ignorant concerning Jesus Christ simply because they embrace a different faith, as the Skeptic would like us to believe.

Notice what Buddha prophesied concerning a coming Savior, pointing his followers to Jesus Christ. Buddha lived before Christ.

*Then the old Brahman priest asked. “What will the characteristics of the Holy One be like?” The Buddha answered him, “The Holy One who will keep the world in the future will be like this: in the palm of his hands and in the flat of his feet will be the design of a disk, in his side will be a stab wound; and his forehead will have many marks like scars. This Holy One will be the golden boat who will carry you over the cycle of rebirths all the way to the highest heaven (Nirvana). Do not look for salvation in the old way; there is no salvation in it for sure. Quit the old way. And there will be a new spirit like the light of a lightning bug which will come down from the sky above to live in all of your hearts and you will be victorious over all your enemies. Nobody will be able to destroy you. If you die, you will not come back to be born in this world again. You will go to the highest heaven (Nirvana).”*

Notice also the following verses in the Koran (or Qur’an) concerning Jesus after He came.

*Allah! there is no god but He the Living the Self-Subsisting Eternal. It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step) in truth the Book confirming what went before it; and He sent down Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this as a guide to mankind and He sent down the Criterion (of judgment between right and wrong). Qur’an 3:2,3 Surah Ale-’Imran (The Family of ’Imran).*

A Muslim reading the above verses in the Koran is pointed to the truth of Jesus Christ who preceded the Koran (there are other verses in the Koran which speak of Jesus). These citations illustrate that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been given far more exposure than what the Skeptic is generally willing to admit.

Their last refuge of defense is often to reference the ignorance of the isolated aboriginal people groups concerning Jesus Christ. Ultimately we do not specifically know how God will judge the ignorant heathen because He does not tell us; but we are told that the judge of all the earth will do

right (Genesis 18:25). No other judge in any court of law would reveal his final sentence on any case before the court has been called into session.

We are told to take the message of the Gospel into all the world, declaring that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. Perhaps God has not told us how He will judge the ignorant heathen because He wants us to focus on obeying the commission to evangelize. We know that any heathen who are saved, will be saved by the Name of Jesus Christ, and by no other! The Skeptic takes an “ignorant position” when he justifies his rejection of the light and truth of the Gospel on the grounds of the ignorance of the heathen. They will not believe anything else on the basis of the “ignorance of the heathen,” but they gamble their eternal destiny on the ignorance of heathen. They choose a *willful* ignorance because some appear to be *innocently* ignorant. An argument made from ignorance is an ignorant argument!

God is calling upon men everywhere to repent of their ignorance and believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 17:30). Why reject the truth of what we can know because others may not know it? Though the message of salvation by Jesus Christ alone is offensive to people in our culture, it is still God’s only plan of salvation. We, like the Apostles, must firmly *believe* it, boldly *proclaim* it, and *acknowledge* that the Judge of all the earth shall do right.

-Paul Shirk

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#### **BIBLE HELPS**

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