

Chapter Nine - Why Are Many Called, But Few Chosen?

Book: Why Were You Born?

The Orthodox Christian world teaches that from the time of Jesus' ministry God has been trying to "save" mankind. But when we observe world conditions today—and consider that Christianity itself is rapidly declining—we can only conclude that God is *failing* in His efforts to "save" the world. Is this really the case? Is God *now* trying to "save the world"? As we will see, from the time of Jesus' ministry to His soon-coming return (about 2,000 years), **"many are called but few are chosen"** to receive eternal life (Matt. 20:16; 22:14).

Why is that? First, we need to consider the state of modern Christianity. We know there are billions of Bibles in the world, in many languages.¹ The Bible is also available to hundreds of millions of people through digital devices, with the numbers soaring into the billions. Even though the Word of God is readily available, and professing "Christians" supposedly believe in the name of Christ, they know little to nothing about what the Bible actually teaches—let alone grasp God's true plan of salvation.

How can that be? If we look around the world, we can see that men have formed innumerable "Christian" denominations with billions of followers. Yet, as unfathomable as it may seem, these churches are *not* of God. Rather, they are *counterfeit versions* of Christianity.² Such spurious organizations use certain parts of the Bible to present a veneer of Christianity. But what they teach has little relevance to the original Christianity Jesus taught. For example, few ministers teach their followers to truly repent of their sins—and claim that the Law has been abolished. Instead of clear biblical directives, they believe and follow the *traditions* of their religious affiliations. This is why most people are unwilling to believe the Bible, obey God, and keep His commandments!

Jesus revealed to His disciples that *many* people would, over time, hear the call of God, but only a *few* would actually respond to that call. The fact is, only those who truly believe in Jesus, repent of their sins, are baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit are *chosen* to receive eternal life. They are the ones who sincerely love God and keep His commandments in spirit and truth—and will always remain *faithful* (Rev. 17:14).

As Jesus warned His disciples, the majority of people would follow the broad, easy way of human nature—the way that leads to destruction. They tend to follow false teachers and false prophets who *claim* to represent Jesus.³ Indeed, this has been true of every generation since Jesus' time. Notice His warning:

"Enter in through the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it [Is this not where the world is headed today?]; for narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

"But beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, for within *they* are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. They do not gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, do they? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a corrupt tree produces evil fruit. A good tree cannot produce evil fruit, nor can a corrupt tree produce good

fruit. Every tree *that is* not producing good fruit is cut down and is cast into the fire. Therefore, you shall assuredly know them by their fruits.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but the one who is doing [practicing and obeying] the will of My Father, Who *is* in heaven.

“Many [all of the ministers of today’s false Christianity] will say to Me in that day [the day of judgment], ‘Lord, Lord, *did we not* prophesy through Your name? And *did we not* cast out demons through Your name? And did we not perform many works of power through Your name?’ And then I will confess to them, ‘I never knew you. **Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness** [and teach that the Law has been abolished, when Jesus said He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets (Matt. 5:17-18)].’

“Therefore, **everyone** [the few] **who hears these words of Mine and practices them** [as a way of life], I will compare him to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock; and the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; but it did not fall, for it was founded upon the rock [that Rock is Jesus Christ (I Cor. 10:4)].

“And everyone [the majority] who hears these words of Mine and does not practice them shall be compared to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it” (Matt. 7:13-27).

Lack of True Belief and Obedience Brings Automatic Spiritual Blindness: As He began His ministry, Jesus personally called and chose the twelve original apostles.⁴ He trained them for three and a half years—progressively teaching them much spiritual truth.

On the other hand, in His public messages to the multitudes that followed Him, Jesus often spoke in *parables*. Realizing that parables typically *cloud the truth*, Jesus’ disciples asked: “ ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ And He answered *and* said to them, ‘**Because it has been given to you [the few] to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [the multitudes] it has not been given.** For whoever has *understanding* [the few who have been chosen], to him more shall be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have *understanding* [the many, those not chosen], even what he has shall be taken away from him.

“ ‘For this *reason* I speak to them in parables, because seeing, they see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, “**In hearing you shall hear, and in no way understand; and in seeing you shall see, and in no way perceive; for the heart of this people has grown fat, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed...**” ’ ” (Matt. 13:10-15).

Multitudes of people followed Jesus, heard Him speak, and saw His miracles and healings. Yes, they desired to see Him, to hear Him, and to be healed by Him; but they refused to believe and obey Him. In so doing, they brought upon themselves automatic spiritual blindness.

After quoting Isaiah, Jesus made an incredible statement. He declared that because the multitudes refused to believe, He *did not want* them to understand and be converted at that time! Though they heard the *call*, their refusal to repent, believe and obey meant that they could not be *chosen* at that

time. This is why Jesus spoke to them in parables. This verifies what He said, that “many are called, but only a few are chosen”—because only the *few* truly believe God and repent. Notice how Jesus described the spiritual condition of the multitudes: They were *dull of hearing* and had *closed their eyes*—**“lest they should see with their eyes, and should hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them”** (Matt. 13:15).

Overwhelmingly, most people have continued in this way since Jesus’ time. Because they refuse to believe, they inflict spiritual blindness upon themselves. Again, this is why “many are called, but few are chosen.”

On the other hand, notice what Jesus said to His *few* chosen disciples who had answered His call: **“But blessed *are* your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear....** Therefore, hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the Word of the kingdom and does not understand *it*, the wicked one comes and snatches away that which was sown in his heart. This is the one who was sown by the way. Now the one who was sown upon the rocky places is the one who hears the Word [of God] and immediately receives it with joy; but *because* he has no root in himself, *he* does not endure; for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, he is quickly offended. And the one who was sown among the thorns is the one who hears the Word, but the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful.

“But the one who was sown on good ground, this is the one who hears the Word [the seed is the Word of God (Luke 8:10)] **and understands**, who indeed brings forth fruit and produces—one a hundredfold, another sixtyfold *and* another thirtyfold” (Matt. 13:16, 18-23).

After Jesus had spoken another parable about sowing the good seed and the tares, He dismissed the multitude. “Then His disciples came to Him, saying, ‘Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.’ And He answered *and* said to them, ‘The One Who sows the good seed is the Son of man; and **the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one.**

“ ‘Now the enemy who sowed them is the devil; and **the harvest is *the* end of the age** [when Jesus returns], and the reapers are the angels. Therefore, as the tares are gathered and consumed in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this age. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all the offenders and those who are practicing lawlessness; and they shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. **The one who has ears to hear, let him hear’** ” (Matt. 13:36-43).

How Does God Call Us?

As Jesus said, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” But *how* does God call us? Jesus commanded His apostles to go into all the world, to all nations (Matt. 28:18-20), even “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). However, all of the apostles *died* before reaching the “ends of the earth.” On the other hand, reaching the “ends of the earth” *has been* and *is being* accomplished through the published Word of God—Old and New Testaments.

Jesus also prophesied that before the end of this age the Gospel would be preached and published in all the world. “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be **proclaimed** in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matt. 24:14). Jesus also said, “And the gospel must first be **published** among all nations” (Mark 13:10).

Since these prophecies have been only *partially* fulfilled, the Gospel will continue to be proclaimed until Christ’s return. Billions of people will yet be able to hear the witness of God. In fact, in the final days of this age, *everyone on earth* will receive the greatest witness of all time!⁵ But true to Jesus’ words, only a *few* will heed the witness and answer God’s call to repentance!

Let’s examine some of the ways God calls a person today. The calling of God begins with the Word of God—when a person reads the Bible or hears the Scriptures being preached. It could be through a television program, a DVD or CD, or by listening to a radio program—or it could simply be through reading biblical articles, booklets or books. Moreover, a calling can be initiated when a person shares his or her Christian experience with a non-Christian.

Most often, God begins to call us when we are experiencing times of trouble, sickness, the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, or when we are disillusioned because everything seems to be going wrong. We experience problems, difficulties, and trials in our lives—we feel overwhelmed, at the end of our rope, even lost. We don’t know what to do! At some point, we realize how *helpless* we really are!

When people are going through times like this, they often begin calling out to God. For many, crying out to God may be their very first prayer. God hears those prayers and will answer! He will intervene and bring relief, comfort, and give us peace in our minds and hearts. This is all a part of how God brings us to Christ (John 6:44).

This is what Jesus meant when He said, “**Ask**, and it shall be given to you. **Seek**, and you shall find. **Knock**, and it shall be opened to you. **For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it shall be opened**” (Matt. 7:7-8). This is what Jesus promised!

How Does God Know When We Begin to Seek Him? To most people, God is somewhere far away. Many even ask, “Does God really know I exist? How can He possibly know anything about me?”

But God is not far off! He declares that He is near: “ ‘*Am I a God Who is near,*’ says the LORD, ‘and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him?’ says the LORD. ‘Do I not fill the heavens and *the* earth [all creation]?’ says the LORD” (Jer. 23:23-24).

Obviously, God is *not* near to the wicked. However, He *is* near to those who call out to Him for help and seek Him with a repentant attitude. Here is how we are to seek God: “**Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon**” (Isa. 55:6-7).

We must turn to God with a *humble heart*. “**The LORD is near to the broken-hearted and saves those who are of a contrite spirit**” (Psa. 34:18). We must call out to God from the depths of our heart *in truth*. “**The LORD is near unto all who call upon Him, unto all who call upon Him in truth**. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them. **The LORD watches over all who love Him**, but all the wicked He will destroy” (Psa. 145:18-20).

Jesus and the Seven Spirits: Few people understand *how* God is able to watch over those who seek, obey and love Him, as well as, to know what the wicked are doing. The answer involves what Jesus calls the “seven spirits.” John writes, “[To] the seven churches that *are* in Asia: Grace and peace *be* to you from Him Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come; and from **the seven spirits that are before His [God’s] throne; and from Jesus Christ**, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth...” (Rev. 1:4-5).

In His message to the church at Sardis, Jesus states that He *has*, or utilizes, the seven spirits of God. “These things says **He Who has the seven spirits of God** and the seven stars...” (Rev. 3:1). (The seven stars are the seven angels to the seven churches—Rev. 1:20).

When in vision, John was taken up to the very throne of God, **he also sees the seven spirits**. “After these things I looked, and behold, a door opened in heaven; and the first voice that I heard *was* as if a trumpet were speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you *the* things that must take place after these things.’ And immediately I was in *the* Spirit; and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *One was* sitting on the throne. And He Who *was* sitting was in appearance like a jasper stone and a sardius stone; and a rainbow *was* around the throne, like an emerald in its appearance.

“And around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones; and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments; and they had on their heads golden crowns. And proceeding from the throne were lightnings and thunders and voices; and seven lamps of fire, which are the **seven spirits of God**, *were* burning before the throne” (Rev. 4:1-5).

What is the purpose of the seven spirits? Why are they there? What do they do? We find the answer in Revelation five. As John continued looking at the throne of God, he wrote, “Then I saw, and behold, before the throne and the four living creatures, and before the elders, *was* standing a Lamb as having been slain [Jesus Christ], having seven horns [the seven churches of chapters 2 and 3] and **seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God that are sent into all the earth**” (Rev. 5:6).

These seven spirits, used and controlled by Christ, are seven special “eyes” of God that are “sent into all the earth.” Why are they sent into all the earth? What do they do?

The Old Testament prophet Zechariah saw a vision of the throne of God, which included a **lampstand with seven lamps**. When he inquired about the lamps, God told him, “**These seven are the eyes of the LORD which run to and fro through the whole earth**” (Zech. 4:10).

Why do they “run to and fro through the whole earth”? As we will see, God uses them to keep watch over the entire earth, including all the nations. This is how God can *know exactly* what is going on at all times. “He rules by His power forever; **His eyes keep watch upon the nations...**” (Psa. 66:7). This applies to individuals as well. “**For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro in all**

the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart *is* perfect toward Him” (II Chron. 16:9).

The following passage is similar to what John saw in Revelation: “The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD’S throne is in heaven. **His eyes behold; His searching gaze tests the children of men.** The LORD tries the righteous, but His soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence” (Psa. 11:4-5).

Thus, Jesus Christ, Who was the LORD God of the Old Testament, *uses* these seven “eyes”—which are constantly going throughout the whole world—to find those who are seeking Him (as well as those who are living wickedly). This is *how* He knows who is seeking God, and can thus hear their prayers. This is how God can *see* everything—good and evil: **“The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are of a contrite spirit”** (Psa. 34:15-18).

After God has answered our first prayers, we will begin to hunger and thirst for additional knowledge about God and Christ. Jesus will respond to us as He promised: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matt. 5:6). When we come to Jesus, the spiritual “bread of life,” we will be *filled*. He said, “I am the bread of life; the one who comes to Me shall never hunger; and the one who believes in Me shall never thirst at any time” (John 6:35). This is how we *answer* God’s call—by drawing close to God and Christ.

As God draws us more and more—and as we yield to His will and repent of our sins—we begin to keep His commandments more fully. Ultimately, our desire is to be among those who are *chosen*.

How Does God Choose?

Now that we have seen that “many are called, but few are chosen,” the question is, **How does God choose?** Since God has given us absolute independent free moral agency, the answer ultimately depends on *our response* to God’s call to repent, believe the Gospel, and believe in Jesus as our personal Savior.

When people hear God’s call and do not respond, it is often because they do not realize that they have sinned and need to repent. Sin is much greater than just having “done wrong”—and repentance is so much more than just “feeling sorry” for what one has done. *We must come to see ourselves inherently as sinners.* This proverb summarizes it well: “There is a way [of life and a way of thinking] which seems right to a man [he does not realize it is wrong], but the end [result] thereof *is* the way of death” (Prov. 14:12).

But what is sin? The apostle John gives us a clear biblical definition: “[For] sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4; KJV). A literal translation brings out a much broader meaning: “Everyone who **practices sin is also practicing lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness.**” To “practice” sin means

a person is living a life that is constantly and repeatedly transgressing the laws and commandments of God—in other words, habitually “practicing lawlessness” as a way of living. *Lawlessness* encompasses many things: to be against all law; to foster chaos and anarchy; to live without God’s laws and commandments; to live with a mixture of some of God’s laws and the traditions or teachings of men; or, to add to or take away from the laws and commandments of God. But the truth is, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

So *how* and *when* does God “choose” a person?

The answer involves the work of God the Father—because the Father is directly involved in choosing, or selecting, those who answer Jesus’ call to repentance. Moreover, Jesus made it clear that only He could *reveal* the Father to those called: “At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and have revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for it was well pleasing in Your sight *to do* this. All things were delivered to Me by My Father; and **no one knows the Son except the Father; neither does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son personally chooses to reveal Him**’ ” (Matt. 11:25-27; also see I Cor. 1:26-31).

Indeed, in order to come to the Father, one must come through Jesus: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; **no one comes to the Father except through Me**” (John 14:6).

But Jesus also revealed that being chosen for eternal life involves the Father’s initiative. Jesus explains: “**No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him...**” (John 6:44). Thus, God the Father draws people with His Spirit, leading them to repentance. As Romans 2:4 shows, it is the “graciousness of God” that leads us to repentance. In other words, repentance is by the grace of God, Who draws individuals to Christ. And one must continue to respond to the leading of God, or He will cease and withdraw His Spirit.

John writes about an occasion when many of Jesus’ disciples left Him because they were offended at some of His teachings. When they departed, they turned their backs on God’s call to eternal life. Instead of repenting and seeking to understand what Jesus was teaching, they left. Again, “many are called, but few are chosen.” When those disciples left, God ceased to draw them and withdrew His Spirit. Thus, they were not *chosen* for eternal life.

To the disciples who remained, Jesus reiterated that to be chosen for eternal life is the joint action of God the Father and Himself: “ ‘But there are some of you who do not believe.’ For Jesus knew from *the* beginning who were the ones that did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, ‘For this reason, I have said to you, **no one can come to Me unless it has been given to him from My Father.**’ From that *time*, many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. Therefore, Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Are you also desiring to go away?’ Then Simon Peter answered Him, ‘**Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life**’ ” (John 6:64-68).

Decades later, John wrote that there is no eternal life without both God the Father and Jesus the Christ: “I did not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and *you understand* that not one lie comes from the truth. **Who is the liar if it is not the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is the antichrist—the one who denies the Father and the Son. Anyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either**” (I John 2:21-23).

When a person truly repents of his or her past sins and accepts the shed blood of Jesus as full payment for those sins, it is necessary to then be baptized by full immersion in water. Under the New Covenant, water baptism symbolizes the *death* of the old sinful self. In baptism, God spiritually conjoins this symbolic death of the repentant sinner with Jesus' crucifixion and death. Through baptism, the new believer makes a solemn pledge to God to cease living in sin and to love God and keep His commandments as a way of life.

Paul makes this absolutely clear: "What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin, so that grace may abound? MAY IT NEVER BE! **We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?** Or are you ignorant that we, as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death?

"Therefore, we were buried with Him through the baptism into the death; so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should walk in newness of life [loving God and keeping His commandments]. For if we have been conjoined together in the likeness of His death, so also shall we be *in the likeness* of *His* resurrection [the promise of eternal life].

"Knowing this, that our old man was co-crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be destroyed, so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin; because the one who has died *to sin* has been justified from sin [all of one's sins have been forgiven]. Now if we died together with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Rom. 6:1-8).

After being baptized, the elder or minister lays his hands on the head of the believer and prays to God the Father that he or she may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 8:15; 19:1-6). ***Following baptism—upon receiving the Holy Spirit—the new believer is fully chosen by God the Father and Jesus Christ.***

In the next chapter we will see how the newly baptized believer is to live and walk in newness of life, as led by the Holy Spirit of God.

Chapter 9 Notes:

1. Today, there are almost seven billion Bibles in circulation covering every major language—that's nearly a Bible for every person on earth! In addition, there are multiple millions of digital Bibles used on a variety of electronic devices.
2. For a scriptural summary of true Christianity, please see "Beliefs and Doctrines of the New Testament Church" at www.cbcbg.org/beliefs.htm.
3. Concerning false teachers and false prophets, see Matt. 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29-30; II Cor. 11:13-15; II Pet. 2:1-3; and I John 4:1.
4. Of the original apostles Jesus called and chose, it was Judas Iscariot who betrayed Him. He was later replaced by Matthias (Acts 1:26).
5. The greatest witness of the Gospel will yet come from the Two Witnesses and the three angels' messages (see Rev. 11:3-12; 14:6-11).