

Jesus Will Draw All Men to Himself

The following article is an excerpt from
“A Study of the Teachings of Jesus Christ”
Written by Joseph F. Harwood
Copyright 2021

<https://www.abookofbiblestudy.net/>

[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

Jesus said: “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself” (John 12:32). Some interpret this verse as meaning that God has offered salvation to every individual who has ever been born, and all they must do to take advantage of this offer is to make the decision to believe in Christ, but is this really what Jesus was teaching?

As always when we are interpreting Scripture, we must consider the context of the passage within which the verse or passage is found. We must also consider if our interpretation is contradicted by any other passage of Scripture. John 12:32 is found within a passage that begins in John 12:20. So we must consider the context of the entire passage (John 12:20-36) in our interpretation of what Jesus was teaching in John 12:32.

Beginning in John 12:20-22, we find that there were Greeks present who were interested in what Jesus had to say, and they came to Philip asking to see Jesus. Philip told Andrew of their request, and the two of them told Jesus.

Jesus then began speaking to all of those present with His teaching about the fruitful grain of wheat, starting in John 12:23. Later in this passage, He said that when He was “lifted up from the earth” (which everyone in those days understood to be a reference to crucifixion), He would draw “all men” to Himself.

Jesus, knowing that there were Greek Gentiles present who wanted to see Him, was communicating to the crowd that He would draw not only those from among the Jews to Himself, but also Gentiles as well. A Gentile is anyone who is not of the Jewish race. So when we consider those who are of the Jewish race, along with those who are not of the Jewish race (Gentiles), then we are considering all races of men, which is to say that we are considering “all men” categorically. This is not to say that we are considering all men individually, or each and every individual who has ever been born.

It was widely understood by both Jews and Gentiles in Jesus’ day that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was the God of the Jews, and that all His promises applied only to the Jews, who were God’s chosen people. However, contrary to this widely held view at the time, Jesus was communicating to all who were in the crowd, both Jews and Gentiles, that the Gentiles were also included in God’s plan of redemption and salvation. This same message was also prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 49:6 and 65:1) and affirmed again in the Book of Revelation where we read: “...Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.” (Revelation 5:9)

When Jesus said in John 12:32 that when He was “lifted up from the earth” He would draw “all men” to Himself, He was saying that He would draw not only men from among the Jewish race, but also men from among the Gentile races as well. To interpret the phrase “all men” in this verse as meaning each and every individual who has ever been born would be an interpretation that is contradicted by the teaching in passages such as John 6:37-40, 6:44, 6:65, Romans 9:1-24, Ephesians 1:4-5, 2:1-10, 1 Peter 1:1-2, and others. These passages teach that God has chosen certain individuals to be brought to faith in His Son. Jesus referred to these chosen individuals as those whom the Father has “given” to Him (John 6:37, 39, John 17:6, 9, 24), and as God’s “elect” (Matthew 24:22, 24, 31, Luke 18:7).

Since the context of John 12:20-36 mentions that Jesus was aware there were Greek Gentiles present who wanted to see Him, we have more confirmation that the “all men” Jesus spoke about in this passage indeed refers to “all races of men”, which is to say both the Jewish race and the non-Jewish (or Gentile) races, or those “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9). Jesus was not teaching in John 12:32 that an “offer of salvation” is available to every individual who has ever been born, as many would say. Rather, He was teaching that not only the Jewish race, but all races of men, would be included in

God's salvation, and Jesus accomplished this salvation at Calvary for all those whom the Father has given to Him.

Consistent with Jesus' teaching in John 12:20-36, the Apostle Paul also taught that all races of men, not only the Jews but also the Gentiles, would be included in God's salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to Timothy:

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. (1 Timothy 2:3-7).

The purpose of Paul's letter to Timothy was to instruct him on how to care for the church at Ephesus, a Gentile church located in what is today the nation of Turkey. ***One of the fundamental truths that Paul wanted to communicate to the Gentile churches was that they too were included in God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, and not only the Jews.*** This is emphasized in verse 7 of this passage of 1 Timothy 2, where Paul described himself as "a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth". The message that the Gentiles races were also included in God's plan of salvation is the same truth that Jesus made clear as He spoke to the crowd as recorded in John 12:20-36, when it was known that Gentiles were present who were interested in His message.

Paul was saying in this passage of 1 Timothy 2:3-7 the same thing that Jesus said in John 12:32, which is that God's salvation through faith in Jesus Christ includes not only the Jews, but also the Gentiles. A Gentile is anyone who is not directly descended from the twelve tribes of Israel. Once again, when we include Jews, and all of those who are not Jews, then we have "all men" categorically, or all races of men, or those "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation", as John wrote in Revelation 5:9.

To interpret the phrase "all men" found in either 1 Timothy 2:4-5 or John 12:32 as meaning each and every person who has ever lived would be to insist on an interpretation that is not born out in the context of the passages in which these verses are found. Such an interpretation would also be contradicted by many other passages of Scripture, which teach that God chooses some to receive His mercy and be saved, while others are hardened, being left in their sins (Romans 9:1-24, others).

Also consistent with Jesus' teaching in John 12:20-36, Peter taught in Acts 2 that the promise of salvation through faith in Christ is extended to all races of men. Speaking to a crowd in Jerusalem, Peter called upon them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.

Peter's exhortation to the crowd again illustrates the outward call of the proclamation of the Gospel message spoken in the hearing of men, calling upon them to put their faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and reconciliation to God. Though many hear this outward call, only few are chosen by God, as Jesus taught in the parable of the wedding feast (Matthew 22:14). These few who are chosen are those who are called to faith in Christ with the inward, effectual calling of God that Jesus spoke about in John 6:37,44, and 63-65.

Immediately after Peter called upon those in this crowd in Jerusalem to put their faith in Christ, he said to them: "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." (Acts 2:39). When Peter said that the promise is for "you and your children", he was speaking to the Jews. When he then said that the promise is also for "all who are far off", he was speaking of Gentiles. So we see that the promise of God's salvation through faith in Christ is for not only for the Jewish race, but for all races of men.

Peter then qualified his statement by saying that the promise is for "as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself", not only from among the Jews but also from among the Gentiles as well, just as Paul also taught in Romans 9:22-24. Therefore, we see that the promise of salvation through faith in Christ *is for all races of men, for as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself from among them all*. The determining factor mentioned here by Peter is God's calling, which is consistent with other passages of Scripture that we have discussed.

From an examination of the context of the broader passages within which John 12:32 and 1 Timothy 2:4-5 are found, *we see that the reference to "all men" in both of these passages refers to "all races of men", or all men categorically, and not to all men individually, as in the sense of each and every person who has ever been born*. To interpret these verses as saying that an "offer" of salvation is "available" to every person who has ever been born would be to violate the context of the passages in which these verses are found, and therefore such an interpretation would be invalid.

In conclusion, Jesus taught in John 12:32 that all races of men, not only the Jews but also the Gentile races as well, will be included in God's plan of salvation. This is the same lesson that Paul taught in 1 Timothy 2:4-5. God's elect will include individuals from all races of men (Revelation 5:9), and these elect individuals will all, in God's time, be drawn to faith in His Son Jesus Christ, and they will all be raised up at the last day (John 6:44). God's plan of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ includes all races of men, as many individuals as the Lord our God will call from among them all (Acts 2:39).