

Universal Salvation?

Essentially, it is not Qumran but Greek grammar usage that is responsible for the use of $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma$, $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\sigma\alpha$ or $\delta\lambda\omicron\varsigma$, $\delta\lambda\eta$ in the New Testament.

These words are often used in a simple, popular, inexact way of speaking in order to express a great or a very great number of persons or things, and sometimes even the majority. Thus, when Matthew writes of the impact of John's preaching and says «Then Jerusalem and the *whole* ($\pi\tilde{\alpha}\sigma\alpha$) of Judea and the *whole* ($\pi\tilde{\alpha}\sigma\alpha$) of the area round about Jordan went out to him and let themselves be baptized in the River Jordan, confessing their sins» (3:5-6 = Mk 1:5), he certainly did not mean to give the impression that *all* of the Jews had been converted to the teachings of John the Baptist or been baptized by him. If that had been the case, Jesus would not have had the problems he had with them. When Mark (1:32-33) says that «they brought to him [Jesus] *all those* ($\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha\varsigma$) *who were sick* ... and the *whole* ($\delta\lambda\eta$) *city* was gathered at the door» it is more than obvious that this is an exaggeration, to indicate that the response was overwhelming. When John has Kaiaphas advise the Jews that it is more expedient that one man perish for the people and that the *whole* ($\delta\lambda\omicron\nu$) *nation* shall not perish (John 11:49), it is again obvious that not all the Jews would have been put to death by the Romans on account of Jesus' hypothetical "misdemeanours". And again, when the Pharisees say at John 12:19: «See the *whole world* ($[\delta\lambda\omicron\varsigma] \delta \kappa\acute{\omicron}\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$) has gone after him» (i.e. the whole world is following him), surely we must not think that the whole world literally had become disciples of Jesus. (D L Q Θ Ψ f¹³ 33 etc. etc. have $\delta\lambda\omicron\varsigma \delta \kappa\acute{\omicron}\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$, whereas older MSS have only $\delta \kappa\acute{\omicron}\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$. However, for the problem at hand, this reading, too, amounts to much the same thing. It is thus, immaterial whether you say «the whole world has gone after him» or «the world has gone after him». In Greek the emphasis is felt on the idea that the whole world is engaged even if you do not use «whole». Both are exaggerations. In Neohellenic the phrase $\delta \kappa\acute{\omicron}\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma \delta\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ or $\delta\lambda\omicron\varsigma \delta \kappa\acute{\omicron}\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$ is a standing phrase to express a very great exaggeration). Similarly, it would be far wrong to draw universalistic conclusions from 2 Cor 5:14: « $\acute{\alpha}\rho\alpha \omicron\iota \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{\epsilon}\theta\alpha\nu\omicron\nu$ » or from the statement in 1 Cor 15:28: « $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha \tilde{\eta} \delta \Theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma \tau\grave{\alpha} \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha \acute{\epsilon}\nu \pi\tilde{\alpha}\sigma\iota\nu$ ».

These few examples (among many others) suffice to show that the NT uses such words as $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma$ and $\delta\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ in a representative way to show that many, very many are involved in something. In the case of Romans, we have the added circumstance that in the OT citations (e.g. in Rom 5:15, 19) the word is «many» ($\omicron\iota \pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota$) reflecting the Hebrew (*rabîm*, רַבִּים Isa 53:11). In Rom 5:18-19 the second $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ is used synonymously with $\pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota$. However, the exact sense of each occurrence of $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ / $\pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota$ becomes evident from the context (See Chrys C. Caragounis, «Rom 5:15-16 in the Context of 5:12-21: Contrast or Comparison?», *New Testament Studies* Vol. 31, 1985, pp. 142-48).