

SALVATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A dispensation is not a time period. There is overlapping sometimes when it comes to dispensations. Dispensation – the act or an instance of dispensing; distribution, something that is distributed or given out. The Greek word (oikonomia) comes from the verb that means to manage, regulate, administer and plan, to divide, apportion.

What does “salvation” mean?

Salvation – the act of saving, preservation from destruction. There are a few different Hebrew words for salvation. One of them is “**Yeshua**” which is the name of Jesus, except you drop the “hey.” Jesus means “salvation” or “the LORD is salvation.” The name Joshua means the same thing. The word “salvation” appears 123 times in the OT.

Turn to Psalm 98:1-3; 116:13 (we are to drink of Jesus’ cup); 118:14; Isaiah 25:9; Isaiah 56:1; 52:7.

The word salvation in the OT dealt heavily with the idea of being saved from earthly things (Ex 14:13; I Samuel 11:11-13.) Eternal salvation suggested at? (Isaiah 35:10 and 51:11; Isaiah 45:17; Daniel 12:2). Therefore we need to make a distinction between temporal, earthly salvation and eternal salvation. We are going to look at how someone was *eternally saved* in the OT. As we look at each dispensation, the question we want to answer is how was someone *eternally saved* during that dispensation?

Before we get into the first dispensation, it should be noted that throughout all dispensations, the blood of Christ is what saves ultimately and eternally. I say that because some might think that what I’m saying is that those in the OT were not saved by the blood of Christ. They were saved based upon the blood of Christ, but they did not know much about the Christ, nor had they faith in his shed blood, nor even knew the true nature and identity of Christ. The only verse that clearly states that Messiah would die is in Daniel 9:26. When was this written? So no one before Daniel could clearly state that Messiah would definitely die. Some might argue Isaiah 53. That’s fine. The problem is Messiah is not talked about in this chapter. It just talks about the “arm of the LORD.” We know now with certainty that this is referring to the Messiah because of the NT but back then it would be harder to make that claim.

A few semesters ago we talked about why it was ambiguous in the OT that Messiah would suffer and die first, and the purpose thereof. It was “hidden” in a sense because that was the means of which God used to destroy the devil and his works and take back the keys of death and hell and bring immortality to light through the gospel of Christ.

In the book of Jonah we have a picture of Messiah. Jonah spent three days and three nights in the fish’s belly. Jonah cried out to God from hell (Jonah 2:1-10) Notice (6) how he says that the LORD brought up his life out of corruption. It reminds me of Psalm 22 and in Acts 13:34-37 that God did not suffer his Holy One to see corruption. It is

interesting that after Jonah is spewed out of the great fish's mouth he preaches to the people of Nineveh. Were those people Jews or Gentiles? Was the gospel of the kingdom of God preached to the Gentiles before "Jonah spent three days and nights in the belly of the whale? No. Afterwards, Jonah preached to the Gentiles and they repented. Likewise after the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus says for the first time, "Go ye into all the world" starting at Jerusalem. Why did Jesus say this was the sign that generation would receive?

As I was saying before, all of saints are made clean by the blood of the Lamb. But Christ didn't die until 2,000 years ago. What about before then? Paul is clear in Hebrews 9:24-25 that he did not suffer from the foundation of the world and neither is he today. In the end of the world he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. How many times did Jesus die? How could people put their faith in Christ when he was not born until 2,000 years ago? How could the blood of Christ cleanse the OT saints from all their sins if Jesus hadn't been born yet and die? This is how the idea of, "People in the OT got saved by looking towards the cross, and we are saved by looking back towards the cross" doesn't make sense biblically speaking. You cannot find one verse that might even suggest that.

If the Jews were looking towards the cross, then when the cross happened how come no one believed? Why did Peter rebuke Jesus saying that this shall not happen to you? Why did the apostles not understand that Jesus had to die and rise again? You want to know why, because it was not so clear in the OT. Jesus actually had to open up the Scriptures and explain everyone to them in the end of Luke.

Does anyone see the problem with the statement that people in the OT got saved by looking towards the cross, and we are saved by looking back towards the cross? The problem is there is no biblical foundation to this doctrine. We are now going to look at the Scriptures, Lord willing, from a mind that is not made up already. We will look at the Scriptures and see what they say. Let us try not to let preconceived notions alter the clear sense of the Scripture. I might be wrong about what I believe about the OT saint's eternal salvation, so might the Baptists, Pentecostals, Catholics, non-denominationalists, etc. Who's right? The Bible. Instead of coming up with clichés about how they were eternally saved in the OT, let us look at the Scriptures alone to determine how eternal salvation was attained.

Again, the overarching question is how was some one eternally saved back then? This is what we are going to try and find out from the Bible.

Dispensation of Innocence (Gen 1-3)

Adam and Eve did not need to be saved. There was no death or sin in this world. There was no need for them to be saved because there was nothing to be saved from. Everything was just the way God wanted it. God gave man a free will which God will never violate. He does not force us to do anything. He won't cross that boundary.

However it can be implied that Adam and Eve were not created with eternal life: for what would be the purpose of the tree of life in the garden? So in order to receive eternal life they would have to eat from the tree of life. Paradise doesn't last long, as we all know and why not? Because Adam ate the forbidden fruit which God commanded him not to eat. In this dispensation, faith had nothing to do with Adam and Eve receiving eternal life because they saw God. The biblical definition for faith is found in Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." They saw God face to face, just like it will be during the millennial reign of Christ.

The way they were to maintain their original state in the image of God was based upon works, their obedience. Is that true or false? So from the very beginning we see that works (work of obedience) was what kept Adam and Eve eternally "saved."

Dispensation of Conscience (Gen 4-8)

Adam and Eve

Man now has knowledge of good and evil and this was the sole source of what they knew what was right and wrong. They did not have knowledge of good and evil before the fall. Adam and Eve have sinned. Read Gen 3:7 and Gen 3:21 and discuss.

Gen 3:7

They sewed leaves together and made aprons: this is a work

- (1) Was that good enough to COVER their sin?
- (2) Was that good enough to completely take away the sin?

Gen 3:21

The LORD *gave* them a different covering by God himself *making* them coats of skins. Notice blood was shed. This proves that your own works is NOT a sufficient covering for sin nor does it take the sin away.

It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul (Lev 17:11)

The blood of animals cannot take away sins (Heb 10:4). Why did God require in the law the sacrifice of animals for sin?

The law was a shadow of good things to come (Heb 10:1) it was a picture of Christ. Think about the Passover and the diverse sacrifices under the Law: without blemish, a male, no bone broken, all of Israel to kill it in the evening, etc.

Gen 22:13 – the ram was offered in the stead of his son. Just like all the animals under the law and prior to the law were offered in the stead of God's Son. (Picture of God the Father and God the Son)

It shows God provided clothing (Zech 3:1-5; 2 Cor 5:2-4; Rev 3:18; 19:7-8)

God made a promise to Adam and Eve about the seed of the woman would come one day and destroy the serpent and his works. Now faith comes into play here (Heb 11:1): This was something that would occur in the future. Eve continued to have faith in the promise of God (Gen 4:25).

Cain and Abel

Turn to Genesis 4:1-7 and discuss. Verse 7 sounds like if you did well you would be accepted.

They both had faith in God by bringing an offering to him. Why would you bring an offering to God if you didn't believe in God? Their faith was NOT the issue. But the type of sacrifice they brought.

Right faith + right sacrifice = accepted, Right faith + offering of works = not accepted.

Noah

Noah finds grace in the eyes of God. (Gen 6:7-13) He was a just man and perfect in his generations and walked with God (He lived in a wicked generation). He was a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet 2:5). Now remember, there was no Mosaic law just the conscience and understanding in the mind of what good and evil was. This is all man had to go by and he choose to do good or evil based upon the law written within their hearts. We know God commands Noah to build the Ark and says he would make a covenant with him. He believed God was going to flood the earth and he obeyed God's command to build the ark. Was this just physical salvation or was it also eternal salvation? It's tough to figure out from this text. See II Peter 2:5. Still it is hard to say. But the Bible does say HE was just and a perfect man. It is most definitely solved in Ezekiel 14:12-14: All these three DELIVERED their SOULS by THEIR righteousness. Suffice it to say that Noah was saved by his own righteousness, by being in obedience to God.

So how was someone eternally saved under this dispensation? It is hard to say. We see that Abel was accepted because he had faith and the right sacrifice. Blood was shed to provide Adam and Eve a covering, though this did not take away their sin. The Scripture is clear that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). However what the blood of the animals did provide was for the sanctification and purifying of the flesh (Hebrews 9:13). Noah was said to deliver his soul by his own righteousness (faith + works). So the salvation schema for this dispensation is either grace through faith, or faith and works: it is hard to say.

Dispensation of Government (Gen 9-11)

Read Gen 9:1-8 and discuss

1. Be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth.
2. the fear of man in all animals and they are delivered into our hands
3. God now allows us to eat animals
4. Do not eat blood
5. Capital punishment

God gives the same command to Noah that he gave to Adam. He tells them both to replenish the earth. All animals now fear us, is that not true? Capital punishment is installed by the LORD God. There is nothing bad about capital punishment. The Law, which we will get to, is filled with capital punishment (Lev 24:16; Num 15:32-36). Again, there is still no written law. They were not commanded to keep the Sabbath day. No one was commanded to keep the Sabbath day until Moses and the dispensation of Law.

The way eternal salvation was attained appears to be the same under the dispensation of conscience up all the way until the law. HOWEVER, the Gentiles did not have the Mosaic Law and couldn't be judged by it. So how were the Gentiles eternally saved during the law dispensation? We will talk about this soon. So how was someone saved under this dispensation? It was either grace through faith or faith + works.

Dispensation of Promise (Gen 12-Ex 19/20)

Abraham

Read Genesis 12:1-3 and discuss.

1. make him a great nation
2. bless Abram
3. make his name great
4. he shall be a blessing
5. God would bless those that bless him
6. curse those that curse him
7. In Abram all families of the earth shall be blessed.

Look also at Genesis 15:5-6

- He believed in the LORD and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Read Romans 4:1-25

- Righteousness imputed to Abraham by believing JEHOVAH, not Jesus.
- Was this righteousness guaranteed to be upon him for ever? Did this justify him?
- A seal of the righteousness of the faith = circumcision (Rom 4:11)
- A seal of the righteousness of the faith today = circumcision of Christ (Col 2:10-12)
- After belief in God, circumcision took place. After we believe what God testifies of his Son, circumcision took place. Is it in the flesh or in the spirit? (Eph 1:13-14; 4:30).
- Abraham was justified by his works when he offered Isaac upon the altar (James 2:21-24)
- Read Genesis 22:15-18
- His faith was made perfect by his works
- Abraham was not made perfect by faith alone, James is clear in saying that his works made his faith perfect. We however are made perfect by faith alone (Romans 5:1-2; 3:24-26)
- Is our faith in Christ made perfect by works? No.

The reason why it seems to be hard to reconcile Romans 4 and James 2 is because we are forcing our dispensational view regarding salvation into the days of Abraham which salvation scheme did not exist. We assume that Abraham's faith alone eternally saved him, but James says by his works his faith was made perfect and that is how he was justified. It does not say in Romans 4 that Abraham was justified by faith or even by faith alone. The righteousness imputed to Abraham was not necessarily an eternal righteousness (the scripture doesn't say, we just tend to assume this). Read Galatians 5:5. They were not through the Spirit waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith (that is the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ). None of this was revealed

to them. We today are justified by the faith of Christ (Gal 2:16). Read Galatians 3:23. The faith had not come yet and was to be revealed after the law.

It appears that faith and works play a part in eternal salvation in this dispensation as well.

RIGHTEOUSNESS - Purity of heart, it includes all we call justice, honesty and virtue, with holy affections; in short, it is true religion.

JUSTIFIED - to pardon and clear from guilt; to absolve or acquit from guilt and merited punishment

Dispensation of Law (Ex 20-death of Christ)

Mosaic Law

Read Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 4:12-13; 24:16; 30:15-16

The Ten Commandments

1. I am the LORD thy God
2. Thou shalt have no other gods before me: Thou shalt not make thee any grave image: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them nor serve them
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain
4. Remember and keep the Sabbath Day
5. Honour thy Father and thy Mother
6. Thou shalt not kill
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery
8. Thou shalt not steal
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor
10. Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbors

Read Ezekiel 18:4-32 and read Ezekiel 14:12-14 (even Ezekiel 33)

Moses set before the children of Israel life and death. They were to obey the commandments of the LORD their God and live, if they transgressed they would die. Your righteousness is what delivered you, not the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-22). God's righteousness outside the law was not YET made manifest according to the Scriptures (Isaiah 41:10; 46:13; 51:5-8; 56:1). Once that faith, that is the faith of Jesus Christ, was revealed, justification, redemption, and righteousness, and eternal life, came by believing on Christ. Salvation was by faith and works.

Read John 11:25-26; Acts 13:38-39; 20:21; 26:18; Romans 3:24-26.

Read again Galatians 3:22-26

The 4 Gospels time period

Everyone was still under the law dispensation during this time period. Galatians 4:4-5 says Jesus was made under the law. Eternal salvation was by faith and works (Matthew 19:16-26). The Holy Ghost was not give until after the resurrection of Christ (John 7:37-40).