

SOTERIOLOGY (15)

When we consider that salvation is a plan that includes identifying sin and dealing with sin so that God's holiness is not violated, and when we consider that God redeems man so His love, grace, mercy and wisdom is fully demonstrated, we must, with Paul, burst out—"Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God."

Reason #5 - God provided salvation because of His character .

It is very clear that one of the motives behind salvation is the character and reputation of God. To simply state the point, people who have been saved have been saved to demonstrate God's character to this world.

Salvation is not by works, but one who is saved has been saved unto good works and is to manifest a lifestyle that reflects the character of God to this world.

There are several passages that make this point clear:

1) Ephesians 2:10 - When we are saved we are the workmanship of God and we are to demonstrate this by our walk and by our life.

2) Titus 3:8 - It is very clear that our godly lifestyle, after we have believed, is profitable for others. When godly character is demonstrated, it can and does make a profound impact on other people. It is important to recognize that Paul is teaching Titus that when each age group lives out its faith, it actually demonstrates the grace of God to men and they literally see God's character and salvation (Titus 2:10-11; 3:1-9).

Our godly lives and good works become exhibit "A" of God's saving grace. It is imperative that we recognize that we have been saved to demonstrate God's character to others. There is much on the line in the salvation of a soul.

This point, in my estimation, is very critical and often overlooked, even by those who have walked with the Lord for many years. There are many who postulate the idea that the main point of salvation is that the person is saved and no longer going to hell. Certainly, we would agree that this is a very significant reason for coming to faith in Jesus Christ. However, it needs to be stressed to one who comes to faith in Christ, that God is the One who saves a person unto good works. Salvation is not just to get a person from point "A" earth to point "B" heaven. God has saved a person so he might become a reflection of God's character on earth.

It is absolutely clear from the N.T. that God wants a believer to grow and mature so that he blossoms into a complete, well-developed portrait of the grace of God. Never was any N.T. biblical writer content with just the knowledge that he was saved from hell. In fact, time and time again they teach and stress it is imperative for believers to grow and for the church to become mature:

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- A. I Cor. 3:1-3 - Paul is obviously rebuking the Corinthian church because it is not mature.
- B. Eph. 4:11-16 - Paul is teaching the Ephesian church that they are to develop into a mature, strong body that is doctrinally stable.
- C. Phil. 3:13-14 - Paul himself saw a need in his own life to continue to grow, mature and develop.
- D. Col. 1:9-14 - Paul wanted the Colossians to grasp deep knowledge so they could demonstrate a worthy, mature, strong testimony.
- E. Heb. 6:1 - The writer of Hebrews wanted more than surface faith.

One of the reasons why every believer is to grow and mature is so he may reflect the character of God (Col. 3:10).

Reason #6 - God provided salvation because of man's destiny.

All men have wandered away from the righteous standards of God (Is. 53:6; I Pet. 2:25). All have fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). Therefore, all men deserve the wrath of God and, in fact, are heading for the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18; Eph. 2:3).

What all of this means is that unless God provides some system of salvation, all men are on their way to eternal damnation. All men, apart from some salvation system of God, are heading to hell. All men can and will go to hell on their own merit for all have sinned.

When one realizes this issue, one immediately sees the significance of coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God's only way of salvation (John 14:6). He is the only way to being saved; there is no other person or name of a person given in all eternity that will save anyone (Acts 4:10-12). Although this issue will be discussed in great detail in future studies, it is very clear here that a person's entire eternal destiny has nothing to do with what he or she has or has not done; it has completely to do with one's relationship with Jesus Christ (John 3:36).

Man's destiny is directly and eternally linked to Jesus Christ because this is God's only provision of salvation.

QUESTION #8 – Who are the lost?

Although this may seem to be a very basic question, it is imperative that this matter be clearly answered, for until one is personally willing to answer this question individually, he cannot be saved.

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The Bible clearly teaches that all human beings are lost. Every man, woman, and child needs salvation. The lost condition of humanity is universal. Until one is willing to accept this reality and divine estimation of self, there can be no salvation.

In the N.T., the term “lost” is used in two ways:

1) Something is lost in the sense that it needs to be found .

In using the word in this way, there needs to be a change in status from lost to found; but there does not appear to be a need for a change in the initial structure of the object that is lost.

For example, in the parable of the “lost coin” (Luke 15:8-10), one of the coins was lost and needed to be found. There needed to be a change of status from lost to found, but not a change in structure; the lost coin was still a coin.

The same is true in the parable of the “lost son” (Luke 15:11-32). The prodigal son certainly needed to be found as he was lost in things he had no business of being in. His status needed to be changed, but not his structure, for he was always a son. In fact, it was his structure as a son that prompted him to get back to his rightful place of sonship.

Dr. Chafer writes: “An object may be lost in the sense that it needs to be found. This use of the word does not imply that a change in the structure or character of the lost object is thereby indicated. It is lost only to the extent that it is out of its rightful place” (Vol. 3, p. 230).

The emphasis of this way of being lost is that the object lost was once in its rightful place and needs to be found and returned to its rightful place. A Christian, for example, who is not in fellowship with God and who is continually involved in sin, is a Christian who is totally misplaced. Even though he needs to be found and returned to his rightful place of having fellowship with God, he is still God’s child and, as Dr. Chafer appropriately says, he still has “...eternal life, imputed righteousness, and union with God” (*Ibid.*, p. 230).

The change needed here is a transitional one from a lost status to that of a found status.

2) Something is lost in the sense that it needs to be saved .

In the Bible, this concept is altogether different from the previous one in the sense that when we refer this to man, we are speaking in terms of a total transformation of character that is to such a degree that God would classify the object as eternally saved.

When the term “lost” is studied in the doctrine of soteriology, primarily this is the issue at stake. It is in this lost condition that man finds himself totally alienated from God and under His wrath. In this state, man needs a total transformation of character and classification to the extent that God deems him as saved.

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A man is lost in at least five ways:

1. He is lost according to God's Word (Eccl. 7:20).
2. He is lost according to personal practice (I Pet. 4:3).
3. He is lost according to inherited nature (Psalm 51:5).
4. He is lost according to divine imputation (Rom. 5:12-21).
5. He is lost according to Satan's power (II Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 1:13; I John 5:19).

When these points are considered, the issue at stake in being lost is one of total transformation of one's character and life. It isn't an issue of returning something to its previous state; it is an issue of completely changing one's previous and present state to that of being saved.

QUESTION #9 – Who is the Savior?

Any person who honestly examines the Bible must conclude that there is only one Person who fits God's requirements for a Savior and actually is the Savior, and that is Jesus Christ!

Any objective reading of God's Word clearly must come to that conclusion:

Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me" (John 14:6).

Peter said, "Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12).

Paul said, "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24).

John said, "And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" (I John 4:14).

These statements from the Bible are very clear—salvation is only found in Jesus Christ. However, to truly understand more and more about this Savior, it becomes important to isolate certain phases of His ministry so as to better understand the One who can save us.

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Growing in knowledge of the saving grace of God, as it relates to Jesus Christ, is an expectation that God has for every believer. The Apostle Peter writes: “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...” (II Pet. 3:18).

When one considers the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, there are seven distinct phases that are very critical to the life and ministry of our Lord:

Phase #1 - There is the preincarnate Christ.

Phase #2 - There is the incarnate Christ.

Phase #3 - There is the suffering Christ.

Phase #4 - There is the resurrected Christ.

Phase #5 - There is the ascended Christ.

Phase #6 - There is the returning Christ.

Phase #7 - There is the reigning Christ.

Each of these phases is critical to soteriology. When one contemplates each one of these, one cannot help but be totally awed by, as Dr. Chafer said, “...the infinite greatness of the One who has undertaken to save the lost” (Vol. 3, pg. 12).

Phase #1 - The preincarnate phase focuses on the fact that Jesus Christ was God from all eternity .

Jesus Christ was the Divine Creator and was involved in Divine government and various Divine appearances prior to His humanity.

Our relationship of the preincarnate Christ to salvation is twofold:

- 1) Our Savior was fully God prior to His saving work.
- 2) Our Savior had a full ministry prior to coming to this earth.

Phase #2 - The incarnate phase focus on the fact that Jesus Christ, as God, became human .

This particular phase was totally unique to the entire Godhead because, as Chafer observes: “...neither the Father nor the Spirit has come into union with that which is human (*Ibid.*, p. 15).

It may also be observed that just as neither God the Father nor God the Spirit have come into union with that which is human, so neither has any other human been so united to the Godhead.

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Again Chafer observes: "...He differs from all others in heaven or on earth in that the breadth of the sphere of His being has been expanded to a point to which none other has ever attained or will ever attain" (*Ibid.*, p. 15).

Just as the preincarnate phase focuses on Christ's deity, so the incarnate phase focuses on the union of His deity with His humanity (hypostatic union). Together, these two important phases reveal that our Savior is a God/Man.

To be an acceptable sacrifice for human sinners, the sacrifice had to be fully God and fully man. There is only one Person in history who meets this criteria and that is Jesus Christ. His preincarnate state establishes His deity and His incarnate state establishes His humanity.

Phase #3 - The suffering phase focuses on the specifics of Christ's suffering as it relates to our salvation.

We will study this in a complete detailed analysis later. This study includes all of the demeaning and degrading things that happened to Christ while on His way to Calvary and the things that happened while on Calvary.

The sacrificial suffering of Jesus Christ is very critical to soteriology. His suffering meets all the requirements demanded by God for salvation and reaches out to the lowest, most sinful among men. The sufferings of Christ are some of the deepest and most moving considerations of human contemplation.

Phase #4 - The resurrection phase focuses on the unveiling of Christ's deity and the glorification of Christ's humanity.

Again, we cite Chafer on this critical matter:

"The incarnation accomplished the union of two natures in one theanthropic Person, in which union His Deity was veiled and His humanity, though sinless, was such as might mingle in the common experiences with other men; but the resurrection accomplished the unveiling of His Deity and the glorification of His humanity. Through the resurrection, He became what He ever will be and that which none other had ever been before—a glorified man in heaven" (*Ibid.*, p. 16).

As the resurrection relates to soteriology, it proves that our justification is secure (i.e. Rom. 4:25), and establishes Jesus Christ as the only Person who could secure it, the glorified God/Man forever.

Phase #5 - The ascended phase focuses on the present work of Jesus Christ, specifically, for those who are identified as being saved.

The fact that Christ's ascension was witnessed physically would certainly speak to the fact that His return will be just as literal and physical (i.e. Acts 1:1-11).

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The ascension of Jesus Christ relates to soteriology in several ways:

- 1) It encourages believers, knowing Christ is presently preparing eternal dwelling places for every believer (John 14:2-3).
- 2) It encourages believers, knowing Christ is presently making intercession for them (Rom. 8:34).
- 3) It encourages believers, knowing that the Living Christ will literally return for them (I Thess. 4:15-17; John 14:3).
- 4) It prompts a believer to live a godly life, knowing Christ will return (I John 2:28).
- 5) It should intimidate every unbeliever, knowing they will face the living Christ (Rev. 6:15-17).

Phase #6 - The returning phase focuses on the final deliverance and reward for those classified as being saved.

By the very fact that Jesus Christ will return to claim those who are believers immediately means that the main emphasis of this part of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ is for His people. The return of Jesus Christ is the blessed hope of the believer. It is one of the key or should be one of the key motivations for living a godly life (i.e. I Thess. 5:1-10).

Phase #7 - The reigning phase focuses on Jesus Christ visibly reigning forever.

Both the nation Israel and the individual Christian will enjoy and share in the reigning phase of Jesus Christ. As it relates to soteriology, the potential of reigning with Christ should cause us to remain faithful and endure whatever comes our way, having this great future hope.

QUESTION #10 – Why did Jesus Christ have to suffer?

When one carefully examines the Word of God on this matter, one soon realizes there is no simplistic answer to this question. In fact, Chafer said the sufferings of Christ “transcend the range of human understanding” (*Ibid.*, p. 35).

Although the central focus of Christ’s sufferings must be the cross, it is clear from direct statements of God’s Word that this is not the only focus:

- 1) Jesus Christ was perfected through suffering. Heb. 2:10

The sufferings of Jesus Christ actually made Him a complete author or leader. As a leader, Jesus Christ became a complete human leader through His sufferings. Suffering enables us to be a complete minister—we understand hurt, pain, difficulties and setbacks.