

Salvation—The Person and Work of Christ

(6th)

(Today we continue studying the Person and work of Christ in connection to salvation. We are discussing the redemptive work of Christ as given Him by the Heavenly Father and that Christ Jesus is the Seed ordained in eternity as the Savior.)

In previous studies regarding the Person and work of Christ in redemption, we saw that because man is a sinner and unable to save himself that he is in need of a substitute. We also saw that this substitute must be sinless in every way so that his conception and birth must be sinless. We discussed the virgin birth and incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity and His infallibility and the hypostatic union of the two natures (divine and human) joined to the divine Person—the eternal Word. Today we are beginning to look at some of the specifics of the redemptive work of Christ.

I believe it should first be considered that the God-man, Christ Jesus, is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah. This should be so obvious to any Bible reader that it need not be discussed, but I have found with over fifty years preaching and teaching the Holy Scriptures that we should not take anything for granted. I heard years ago that at one time the famous Neiman Marcus had an advertisement that said, “Do not, never, assume nothing.” While I cannot prove this to be true, I have used this phrase over the years to emphasize the importance of not assuming. Furthermore, on more than one occasion, I have enlarged on a topic that I assumed everyone in the audience already knew to find that someone would come to me afterwards and thank me for bringing to their attention something that they did not know. Therefore, I will run the risk of imposing on your wisdom by discussing this somewhat. If we tried to cover everything about the Messiah and Christ Jesus, our study would be exceedingly large and beyond the purpose of the podcast; nevertheless, we will try simply to cover the basics regarding our subject matter. (It should be obvious that it is impossible to know and teach everything about the Lord Jesus Christ because of the infinitude of the subject matter.) With this in mind, let us see if we can weave a “scarlet thread” of the Seed ordained in eternity for the redemption of man.

The redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ was not derived as a result from the fall of man. It began in eternity with God prior to the fall. II Timothy 1:9 declares, “Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” This plainly states that our salvation is “not according to our works, but according to” the “purpose and grace” of God. Furthermore, we are told that this salvation “was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” No, the plan and purpose of salvation did not originate after man fell in the Garden of Eden; it originated in God in eternity. However, subsequent to the fall, the redemptive work of God began to be manifested in the Garden. After man partook of the forbidden fruit—the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil—the Lord addressed and placed a curse on Adam, Eve, and the serpent (Satan). For time sake, we will only direct our attention to one part of the curse as given to Satan. The Lord said to him, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel,” Genesis 3:15. Theologians for centuries have referred this verse as the protoevangelium or the first gospel. Here we see that the Seed of the woman is to bruise the head of the serpent (Satan). It is generally understood that the final blow to a serpent is the crushing of the head. Therefore, the protoevangelium as proclaimed in the Garden gives insight to the fact that the Seed of the woman is going to destroy Satan.

After the flood, God told Noah that He would establish His covenant with him and his seed after him, Genesis 9:9. Though this covenant included all of mankind, I believe the seed in this covenant is somewhat connected to the “seed of woman” in the Garden of Eden because Hebrews 11:7 says that Noah “became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” The Lord willing, we shall clearly see in future studies that “the righteousness which is by faith” is Christ. For the purpose of the current topic under

consideration, we must force ourselves to devote our attention at this time to the Seed as prophesied in the Scriptures.

Next under consideration is the Seed promised to Abraham. Normally our attention is directed to the fifteenth chapter of Genesis and it is often presented that this is when faith is first associated with Abraham. However, this is not the case. We find that faith and the Seed of Abraham is in the picture before Genesis chapter fifteen. The inspired writer of the book of Hebrews declared that Abraham had faith prior to leaving Ur of the Chaldees: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went," Hebrews 11:8. Nothing can be plainer; Abraham had faith when he left Ur. It is generally believed that prior to him having faith that he worshiped other gods. See Joshua 24:15; Isaiah 51:1-2. We are not told how long he lived in idolatry or what his age was when he left Ur. We know that he was seventy-five years old when he left Haran, Genesis 12:4. Furthermore, we know that God promised him that He would make of him "a great nation," Genesis 12:2. It must not be overlooked that God made this promise to Abraham before he left Ur because of the important word "had" in Genesis 12:1, "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." It is important to know that many modern translations, along with the Roman Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible, omit the word "had" from this verse because it does not fit their theology. Nevertheless, the promise Seed was given to Abraham in Ur prior to his living in Haran. Again, we do not know how long Abraham lived in Haran but, as noted before, he left there at the age of seventy-five upon the death of his father. Furthermore, the promised Seed was also pledged to him at this time. After going into Canaan and Egypt and back to Canaan, due to the increase of the wealth of servants and herds, he and Lot (his nephew) separated. See Genesis 13. Upon this separation, God again spoke of the promised Seed to Abraham, Genesis 13:14-17. Afterwards we are told of the capture of Lot and Abraham leaving Hebron (in the plains of Mamre) with three hundred and eighteen "trained" servants, "born in his own house," and rescued Lot and brought him back to Sodom. It was at this time that Melchizedek, "king of Salem," and "priest of the most high God," blessed Abraham, Genesis 14:18-20. This brief resume of the life of Abraham prior to Genesis fifteen clearly reveals that Abraham had faith and the promise of the Seed prior to this time.

Though it is extremely important to know that Abraham had faith and some understanding regarding the promised Seed prior to Genesis fifteen, it must equally be known that Genesis fifteen is a pivotal point in the life of Abraham and the imputed righteousness of Christ as payment for our sins in the redemptive work of God for His people. As we will see, the Lord willing, in future studies, this point in history is brought to our attention especially in the books of Romans and Galatians regarding justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Again, we do not know how old Abraham was at this time, but we do know that it was ten years from the time he left Haran and the conception of Ishmael, Genesis 16:3-4. He would be eighty-five at this time and eighty-six at the birth of Ishmael (Genesis 16:16), and I believe it could safely be said that he was close to this age when the Lord appeared to him as recorded in Genesis fifteen.

Some may be wondering why we should go to great lengths to show this history of Abraham? It is because all too often the general consensus is that at Genesis fifteen is when Abraham "first believed and was saved and/or justified." But upon close investigation of the Holy Scriptures this is not the case. Equally, how one interprets these passages will reveal his theology of salvation. Our belief is that salvation is totally (one hundred percent) of grace and not by works or by a combination of grace and works. Too often people will claim that salvation is solely by grace and yet proclaim that there is some means of man or energy put forth by man to achieve it. However, the Scriptures clearly reveal that the pattern of faith—Abraham—was a worshiper of idols in Ur and God immediately regenerated or changed his heart and instilled faith in him. Since Abraham is the example and father of the faithful (or of faith, Romans 4:11), it is important that eternal life is not attributed to Abraham when he first publically

believed as recorded in Genesis fifteen. Obviously, life precedes faith, and the history of Abraham as recorded in the Scriptures clearly demonstrates this blessed truth. No, it is not our intentions to minimize the importance of Genesis fifteen, but we must be careful not to ascribe more to this passage than what is taught in the Word of God. As we said before, Genesis fifteen (especially Genesis 15:6) is clearly a pivotal point regarding the truth of Jesus Christ being the Seed whereby the redemptive work of God is accomplished. It is also important in studying about the justifying righteousness whereby the sinner is accepted by God. Therefore, it is essential that we have a solid and clear foundation upon which to establish the truth of justification when, the Lord willing, we study this subject in the future. Nevertheless, we have seen from our study today that clearly Abraham had faith and some inclination about the promised Seed at least ten years before (and likely longer) Genesis fifteen. And since this vital truth is generally overlooked in the study of salvation and/or justification, it is imperative that we know these facts.

However, our plans are to study Genesis fifteen in more detail in our next podcast since our time is up for today. Farewell.