

**THE SALVATION OF MAN THROUGHOUT HISTORY:
THE BASIS OF SALVATION AND ITS APPLICATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

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Introduction

The biggest distinction between Christianity and any other religion is the clear teaching of the Bible that salvation is by faith alone, in Christ alone, through grace alone. This marvelous distinction was recaptured during the Protestant Reformation because men studied the word of God and witnessed its contradiction with the traditions being taught by the Catholic church at the time. The Reformation provided clarity concerning salvation and how it was received. Despite this development, there remains confusion in regards to the way justification was received before Christ. The basis of salvation is the substitutionary death of Christ. So the receiving of salvation, post-crucifixion, is by faith in Christ's work on the cross, done on man's behalf. It is the objective of this paper to provide further clarity on the basis of salvation as well as how salvation was received before Christ went to the cross and rose from the grave.

I. THE BASIS OF SALVATION

The word "salvation" is not a technical term. This means it does not have a cemented meaning that carries over into any context that this word appears. The word then functions like any word and carries a broad definition that is specified by the context. The word salvation simply means deliverance. The context will inform the reader as to what the object is delivered from. The definition assigned for salvation in this paper will be the theological definition. Salvation is the deliverance of man from facing the penalty of sin, which is death (cf. Rom. 6:23a) and eternal separation from God.

The necessity for man's deliverance from the penalty of sin requires explanation of what sin is and why it has a penalty. The Scriptures are the source of revelation where we observe what God wants man to know about Him and what He is seeking to accomplish. The very first

words in the Bible are “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (cf. Gen. 1:1a). This significant statement is an introduction of God and reveals existence before man and before creation. The powerful observation is that God is the only uncreated being. Furthermore, God is the source of all creation. This truth falls under the teaching of the holiness of God. Holy means separate or set apart. Used in this context it means that God is distinct from all creation.

This holy God revealed in Scripture creates humans in His image. The first man and woman have a relationship with their creator and enjoy the blessings of fellowship with Him. However, in Genesis 3 this relationship is fractured. Adam and Eve disobey God by eating of the one tree they were forbidden to eat from (cf. Gen. 2:15-17; Gen. 3:1-24) and the concept of sin is introduced. Before sin occurred, God informed Adam of the penalty of sin. He told Adam “the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Salvific Typology:

Adam and Eve sinned against God and faced the penalty of death. However, something interesting happens for the first couple. Instead of death, Adam and Eve witness God’s grace and deliverance from sins penalty. Adam and Eve attempt to hide their sin with sown together fig leaves. God rejects their coverings and supplies a covering for them Himself. Instead of executing His penalty on Adam and Eve, He lists the consequences of their rebellion (Gen. 3:13-19), and then, before banishing them from the garden, He provides “tunics of skin” (v. 21). These tunics of skin came from the skin or hide of an animal. This act by God appears to be a foreshadow or type of something developed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament. Donald K. Campbell gives a great definition for a type: “a type is an Old Testament institution, event, person, object, or ceremony which has reality and purpose in Biblical history,

but which also by divine design foreshadows something yet to be revealed.”¹ What God did for Adam and Eve appears to fall under this definition. There was a life taken to deliver a life from the same consequence. It was a substitutionary sacrifice.

The sacrifice typology develops in the Old Testament and two particular instances show this. The first instance occurs in the next generation from Adam and Eve. Their children, Cain and Abel, make an offering to the Lord. Cain, as a tiller of the ground, provides an offering of the fruit of the ground. Abel however, being a keeper of sheep offers the firstborn of his flock. The sacrifice of the lamb made by Abel appears to be following the principle of life for life. As it happens God looks with favor on Abel’s offering, while Cain’s offering is a disappointment before the Lord. The text isn’t clear as to why exactly Cain’s offering was rejected, but what we see in this first instance of animal sacrifice is its function in worshipping the Lord. It is a step of development in typifying the ultimate sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

The second instance is in the life of Job. The first verse speaks admirably of the man’s character by saying of Job “that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.” Job’s belief in the Creator caused him to provide animal sacrifices. Job had a practice of offering burnt offerings for each of his children in order to “sanctify” them (cf. Job 1:5). This practice by Job was an act of interceding for his children who might have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. There are three specific points that show the development of sacrifice typology. The first is that Job’s offerings were for sanctifying purposes. A person who is sanctified is set apart specifically to the Lord for holy purposes. The second specific point of Job’s sacrifice is that it is indeed an animal sacrifice. This follows the life for life principle originally set forth in God providing animal skins to cover Adam and Eve. The third specific

¹ Donald K. Campbell, “The Interpretation of Types,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 112 (1955): 250.

point is that this sacrifice is somehow related to sin. Job's reasoning for the sacrifice is that "it may be that my sons have sinned" (cf. v. 5). Job's sacrifice is a development of the typology that is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

A major development to sacrifice typology is observed in the Levitical offerings under the Mosaic Law. There are five Levitical offerings: the burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. Dr. Fruchtenbaum mentions "four of these offerings were blood sacrifices and one was bloodless."²

The burnt offering is mentioned in Leviticus 1:3-17. The process was to bring an unblemished male from the worshipper's livestock and offer it at the door of the tabernacle of meeting (v. 3). The worshipper would then put his hand on the head of the offering to be accepted on his behalf (v. 4). The offering was then killed before the Lord, and the priests. The priests would take the blood of the offered animal and sprinkle it all around on the altar (v. 5). The offering was then skinned and cut into pieces and laid, by the priests, upon an altar with fire (vv. 6-8). The entire offering was then consumed by the fire and was said to be a "sweet aroma to the Lord" (v. 9). Dr. Fruchtenbaum suggests that this offering typifies the basic truth that "the Messiah offered Himself to God without spot and without blemish."³

The meal offering is mentioned in Leviticus 2:1-16. The meal offering or grain offering was made by pouring oil over fine flour and putting frankincense on it (v. 1). This mixture was then taken to the priests, and one of them would take a handful and burn it on the altar with fire (v. 2). The rest of the grain offering was then provisions for the priests (v. 3). There were options

² Fruchtenbaum, "The Messianic Bible Study Collection" (vol. 180 pg. 7)

³ Ibid

to present a baked grain offering, but these were restricted from having leaven or honey in the mixture. The suggested type here is that this offering pictures the perfect humanity of the Messiah.⁴

The third offering is called the “peace offering” and appears in Leviticus 3:1-17. This offering follows the sequence of that of the burnt offering, except this is done to make peace with the Lord. This includes the killing of the animal, the sprinkling of the blood around the altar and the burning of the sacrifice on the altar. Apparently, this offering was laid atop the burnt offering (v. 5) perhaps implying an initial sacrifice be made first. Also, specified portions of the sacrifice are kept by the one providing the sacrifice (vv. 3-4). The implication is that the one sacrificing shares in the offering with God, and perhaps signifies the fellowship now achieved through this offering.⁵ The anti-type is suggested to be the Messiah’s acquiring of peace between the believer and God.⁶

The fourth offering is called the “sin offering” and is laid out in Leviticus 4:4-5:13. The premise for this offering is said to be “if a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the Lord” (v. 2). The distinction of this offering and the first three is that it is mandatory and not voluntary like the first three.⁷ The offering was made to address the unintentional sin of a priest (v. 3), the whole nation (v. 13), rulers (v. 22), and common people (v. 27). The sin offering typifies the satisfactory, substitutional death for the Messiahs for the forgiveness of sins.⁸

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

The fifth offering is called the “trespass offering” and is found in Leviticus 5:14-6:7. This offering is also a mandatory offering. Dr. Fruchtenbaum explains this offering as a “reparation offering or guilt offering ... it has to do with an act of misappropriation or denial of that which is rightfully due to another, with the word “another” being God or man.”⁹ The typology here is how the Messiah’s death pays for the penalty of sin, or the harmful effects of sin.¹⁰

Propitiation and its results:

A wonderfully blessed truth comes from the revelation of the anti-type or fulfillment of the above listed sacrifices. It is partially encapsulated in a beautiful word called “propitiation”. Propitiation means “to satisfy”, “appease”, or “placate.”¹¹ When this word speaks of the death of Christ it is emphasizing the result of His sacrifice in satisfying or appeasing the wrath of God. God’s wrath is engrained in His nature and is specifically seen to be the hostility of God towards sin and the sinner. God’s wrath is a response to unrighteousness or things that do not conform to His created purpose and personal holiness. Now the terror of this truth gives way to joy because God is not wrath alone but also love, and mercy as well as a multitude of other character qualities revealed to us in Scripture. Robert Lightner suggests two helpful ways to understand the nature of propitiation and love. He says “it is not a matter of either propitiation or love on the part of God but rather it is His infinite love which provided the propitiation or satisfaction of His person in Christ. Neither are we ever to understand that Christ’s propitiatory sacrifice turned the wrath of God into love. That is, God must never be viewed as One Who became soft and

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Lightner, *The Death Christ Died*, (pg. 78)

easygoing and simply overlooked, because of some emotional stress, the true intensity of His hatred for sin. No! He poured out the full judgment of sin on Christ.”¹²

Four passages use the English word propitiation. The first is Romans 3:25, which says “whom God (speaking of Jesus) set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.” The truth revealed in this text says that God was able to overlook the sins of the people before Christ’s sacrifice because of Christ’s sacrifice. This is exactly what is meant by Jesus’ death being the basis of salvation even though the precise knowledge of His death for mankind’s sin wasn’t revealed to the Old Testament saints.

The second passage using the word propitiation is Hebrews 2:17. Here, the writer says “Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” This text hits the center of the typological significance of Old Testament sacrifices. Jesus Christ had to be made “like His brethren” that is, to take on human flesh, in order that He could pay for the penalty that the human race had obtained. The significance to this beautiful passage is that Jesus, taking on flesh, also died as the penalty required. The penalty being paid, satisfied or appeased the One that gave the sentence (cf. Gen. 2:16-17).

The third passage is found in 1 John 2:2. The beloved Apostle says “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” The context of this text comes from the verse before it. John addresses the issue of sin when it occurs in a believer. He encourages his reader by revealing the position of Jesus as an “advocate with the

¹² Ibid

Father”. The picture is of Jesus being our legal defense attorney and defending us before the Father when we have sinned. The basis of Jesus’ legal defense is that the penalty has already been paid and therefore, it does not have to fall on the sinning believer.

The fourth passage is also in this letter and is towards the end, in 1 John 4:10. The verse says “In this is love not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins”. This is a wonderful revelation that shows the love for all humans that the Triune God has. It is not as though God the Son, was acting outside of the will of God the Father. This verse shows that God the Father sent His Son, and the Son willingly died for the sins of the human race. The blessed truth of propitiation is originated in the loving grace of God.

Justification and its application:

An interesting issue arises when discussing the Old Testament application of justification. The issue is that faith in Christ is a historical impossibility for those living before Christ came. The issue is specifically what was the content someone must believe in order to be justified? There are three suggested models for how someone was justified in the Old Testament.¹³ These three models serve as a solution to the issue.

The first model is faith in the promised seed. This model is emphasizing what is called the protoevangelium observed in Gen. 3:15. God says to the serpent who tempted man into sin “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” This first model has as its strength the fact that this is the very first promise of what God plans to do concerning the fall of man. Additional information concerning this promised seed is not provided until later in God’s revelation. This

¹³ DISPENSATIONALISM TH408 (lesson 12 “The One Way Of Salvation”)

makes it difficult for this position to find evidence of this being specific content one must believe in order to be justified.

The second model is more general and sees the content of faith as simply faith in God or the promise of God. The more general approach to this issue is a safe one. However, without more specificity it is difficult to defend biblically, although it cannot be ruled out as a legitimate possibility.

The third model attempts to be more specific and nuanced. The content of faith in model three is faith in the promised seed, or faith in the one true God. The faith in the promised seed would be the content a Jew would believe, while the more basic faith in the one true God would be for Gentiles. The strength of this model is that it accounts for progressive revelation, and suggests that man is responsible to what has been revealed to them. The Jews were the ones who received and were stewards of God's revelation (cf. Rom. 9:4). The Gentiles may have heard of the events recorded in the scriptures but they would not have the same access of the knowledge of the coming Messiah that the Jews had. Additionally, what we observe with individual Gentiles being justified is that their faith in the one true God is the only content highlighted in those passages.

Dr. Fruchtenbaum adds a bit more clarity with his view that suggests the content of faith was based on what God has revealed up to that time.¹⁴ A strength to this view is that it recognizes the aspect of progressive revelation. Progressive revelation is the observation that God did not give his revelation all at once, but simply bit by bit over an extended period of time. An important point to the principle of progressive revelation is that new revelation will not

¹⁴ Fruchtenbaum, "Dr. Fruchtenbaum Shares The Gospel" (Ariel Ministries Facebook page)

contradict old revelation. The new develops and often clarifies the previous revelation. Dr. Fruchtenbaum lists three particular periods of time where the content of faith was given greater detail.

The first period is the time after the fall of man. The emphasized content in this period is the protoevangelium of Gen. 3:15. The second period of time is the patriarchal period. The emphasized content in this period is the promises of God revealed to Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant. The third period is the Mosaic law period. Dr. Fruchtenbaum suggests there are two points as the content of one's faith in this period. The first content of faith is that God is the only God. Elaborating on this he says this point rules out two errors. It rules out idolatry, and it rules out polytheism.¹⁵ The second content of faith is God is the only savior. This Dr. Fruchtenbaum explains, rules out trusting in one's own good works for salvation. A Jew or Gentile believing these two points would receive eternal life.¹⁶

II. JUSTIFICATION APPLIED BEFORE CHRIST

Two New Testament passages are sufficient to prove that justification in the Old Testament is by faith alone. The first passage is Galatians 3:11. The book of Galatians is written by Paul to defend the true gospel and to correct the errors surrounding how someone is declared righteous (justified) by God. Paul says "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith.'" There are two simple points to what Paul is saying. First, one is NOT justified by the works of the law. Anyone that would teach justification by law keeping is teaching a false gospel. The second point Paul emphasizes is that justification IS by

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

faith. He quotes from Habakkuk 2:4 and in so doing underlines the consistency of Old Testament justification with the message of justification he preached to the Galatians.

The second New Testament passage that proves justification has always been by faith alone is Roman 4:1-8. The topic Paul is addressing here is the same as the issue in Galatians. He states the issue “For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God” (v. 2). The implication here is that no one is justified by works. Paul then states, “For what does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Paul highlights Abraham’s justification before God came as a result of Him believing God. Paul defines justification here as a gift stemming from the grace of God. This is observed in verse 5 “But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness”. The point Paul is making can be illustrated by a hypothetical scenario. Say, there are two individuals, both trying to be justified before God. Person one aims to keep the law given by God in order that God would see that and declare them righteous. Person two does nothing but simply “believes on Him who justifies the ungodly”. Paul’s conclusion is that person two, by faith alone was declared righteous by God.

Paul continues this point by showing that even individuals under the law were not justified before God by keeping the law. He mentions King David. “just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.’” (vv. 6-8) Paul uses the example of two men, one before the law, and one under the law, and makes the clear observation that both of them were justified before God by faith and not their works.

III. JUSTIFICATION APPLIED AFTER CHRIST

Jesus Christ's death on the cross was a wrath satisfying death. It opened the way for sinful man to be declared righteous before a holy God. The shed blood of Christ forms the basis of salvation in every age. Faith is the means of salvation in every age, though it has been shown that the content of faith has been developed through history. Faith in the one true God and that salvation is in Him appears to be the content of what the Old Testament saint believed. The extent of the Old Testament believer's knowledge concerning the promised seed and God's redemptive purposes is only evident in a progressive way as Scripture gets revealed bit by bit. As we come to the New Testament and the close of the canon of Scripture, we get the full picture that salvation is by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Jesus Himself first preached the message of salvation in Him alone. The Apostle John records this in the gospel account he wrote. Jesus said "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6). Peter repeated the message with boldness when John and he stood trial before the religious leaders who were responsible in the push to crucify Christ. Peter reminds them of their guilt when he says "let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole (Acts 4:10). He then emphasizes the truth of salvation being in Christ alone. He says "nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (v. 12). The content of faith is the substitutionary death of Christ for the sins of every individual. If someone is to be saved it will be when that message is believed.

Conclusion:

God paints a beautiful picture in the revelation He delivered to mankind in the Bible. Using sacrifice typology and its gradual development throughout scripture, the reader sees two observations. The first is that the one offering the sacrifice recognizes that salvation is found in God. Secondly, there is recognition of substitution. The one providing the sacrifice recognizes the picture that the animal died in their place. Jesus Christ fulfills these types. He died in the place of every person that has ever lived. Anyone that believes in Him alone will receive the free gift of eternal life, and are delivered from the wrath of God. Salvation is by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ Jesus alone. Nothing more. Nothing less. Nothing else!

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