

SO GREAT A SALVATION

This is designed to be a systematic outline of the facts and factors involved in God's plan of salvation. There is a great deal of confusion today, even among Christians, as to the nature of salvation. In this paper, we will consider primarily salvation in this Church age. However, God has been saving people in every age and era, always and only based on the finished work and shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The difference is not in the basis of salvation, but in the content of the revelation that God has/had made known in differing eras. Obviously, a person born long before the Lord Jesus came to this Earth would not be able to personally put his or her trust in His Person and work on the cross, as we are today called to do. Rather, each person was expected to trust God in the revelation given him, relying on God to provide the means of salvation. In other words, the content of God's revelation relative to salvation varied, but the basis, for God, was always the same: the Person and Work of Christ.

For example, Abraham, it is recorded, "...believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:6). Throughout the centuries, men believed God and He accounted it to them for righteousness. Today, we still do the same: We believe God when He says, through Paul, "...believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved..." (Acts 16:31).

With this in mind, let's now consider biblical, theological truth as it is disclosed in the Bible. This is presented in outline form, so as to present the clearest possible message without any extraneous words. Obviously, not all is included that might be said about God and Christ.

I. Who IS Jesus Christ?

A. His Person

- He is the only-begotten Son of God (John 1:14)
 - (This does not mean He was, at some time, created. The term literally means: One of a kind [monogenes]. He is unique, eternal, uncreated.
- He is eternal. (John 8:58)
- He was in the beginning. (John 1:1,2; 17:24)
- He created all of creation. (John 1:3)
- He is very God (John 1:1; 10:30)
- He is the Word of God (John 1:1-2)

Note: He is the only, unique Son of God the Father. God is the eternal Father. As such, the Son must be eternal, for there cannot be an unchanging God who is eternal and who is Father, if there was a time when He did not have His Son. He is the Word of God, the express image of God. (Hebrews 1:3)

B. His Incarnation

- He was born of the virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1;27,35)
- He was true, truly Man. (John 1:14; Hebrews 4:15; 2 John 7)
- He was and is true, truly God. (John 5:18; 14:10)
- He was tempted in all points. (Luke 4:1-13; Hebrews 2:18; 4:15)
- He was without sin. (John 8:46; Hebrews 4:15)
- He brought the good news of God to the world. (John 3:16, 524; Romans 3:21-26)
- He was crucified, dead and buried (Luke 22:54; 23:54)

Note: In Jesus, the Christ, there was a hypostatic union of two natures in one person, for He had to be a man to properly represent man as the representative Adam, and He had to be God, for only God is both infinite, impeccable, and omnipotent. In no other way could His sacrifice be sufficient.

Note 2: Jesus Christ was born of the Holy Spirit, to a virgin. Thus, He partook of the nature of man through his earthly mother, yet was without sin (the sin of Adam's race) for He had no earthly father. He lived, grew, laughed, loved, enjoyed, ate, drank, wept, agonized and partook of all things of man, yet without sin of any kind. His entire life was living in the will of His Father. He was God become man – the God-Man – in order that He might reconcile the world to God the Father.

C. The Glorified Christ

- He was bodily resurrected on the third day, the first day of the week. (Luke 24)
- He was raised with a glorified body, possessing remarkable properties, yet capable of eating and drinking and appearing as a natural, normal body. (Luke 24:36-43; John 10:12; 20:19-20)
- In this glorified body, He ascended into heaven, after 40 days on the earth, to sit on the right hand of God the Father. (Acts 1:9-11; Hebrews 1:3; 10:12)
- From then on until now, He is our Intercessor and Advocate before the throne of God. (1 John 2:1-2)
- He is our High Priest, who has offered the perfect sacrifice (Himself) for us. (Hebrews 10:10-14)
- He is coming again to the world, first to call His Church, the Body of Christ, to Himself, and later to come to the Earth to rule and to judge. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 14:1-3; Rev. 19:11-16; Matthew 24; 2 Peter 3).
- He will rule sovereignly in the Millennial Kingdom. (Rev. 20:1-6)

Note: Our Lord was "perfected through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10) and ascended into heaven with His glorified body, the first fruits (or, prototype) of God's plan for man. Now the Son of God, very God Himself, possesses a glorified body in heaven, similar to the body to be provided for all who are accepted in heaven by God. His people, given to Him by the Father, includes saved people of all eras, and all will possess that heavenly body.

II. What is the purpose and function of the first advent (coming) of Christ?

A. To provide salvation for men. (John 3:16)

- Salvation from the wrath and condemnation of God.
 - All have sinned and fall short of God's standard – perfection. (Romans 3:10-23; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 7:18)
 - God's wrath remains on men unless man believes God, thus having God account this to him for righteousness. ((John 3:18, 36; Romans 1:18; 5:9)
- Salvation to eternal life
 - Eternal life is different from eternal existence (which is the condition of every human). It is a quickening, a life that begins the moment we receive Christ. (John 3:3, 36; 5:24; 17:3; Romans 6:4)
 - It is a quality of life provided by the very indwelling of God the Holy Spirit. (Romans 8:9)
 - Eternal life includes resurrection of the body, after death or translation. (Romans 8:11, 18-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

B. Who is involved in salvation?

- God's part in salvation
 - God provided the plan and sacrifice. (John 3:16; 1:29; 1 Peter 1:19-20; Hebrews 2:9-14; Romans 8:32)
- Christ's part in salvation
 - He was the willing and perfect sacrifice. (Hebrews 2:9-14; John 10:17-18)
 - His blood paid the price of salvation. (Hebrews 9:12-14; 10:19; Romans 3:24-26; Romans 5; 1 Corinthians 6:20)
 - His life and death and resurrection manifested God's glory and God's love. (Luke 2:20; John 13:31-32; 17:1-4; 21:19)
- Man's part in salvation
 - Salvation is a gift from God to man. (Eph. 2:8; Romans 6:23)
Man cannot earn it, buy it, repay it, or demand it. He is spiritually bankrupt, and can only respond to God by claiming the gift.

Man cannot assure or insure this salvation through good works subsequent to salvation. He is, indeed, to do good works, for God has already created them for man to walk in (Eph. 2:10). But, while he will be rewarded for his good works in Christ (1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10), he can not claim them as an obligation on God.
 - Salvation is given to demonstrate God's love and to glorify Him.
God's primary purpose in salvation is not the saving of souls, but as a manifestation of the breadth and depth of His love, mercy and grace, for the express purpose of bringing proper glory to the nature and character of God.

Note: Our Lord came to manifest God's glory and love and to provide a way of salvation for man from the wrath and condemnation of God, and to bring some into eternal life in Christ.

Salvation is received by relying totally and utterly on the finished work of Christ for acceptance with the Father (Eph. 2:8-9)