

# What Does the Bible Say About . . .?

January 22, 2007

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## Salvation Part II: New Testament

- I. Introduction
  - A. Announcements
    1. Open with prayer
    2. Any new people? If so, summarize need to bring paper, pen, and Bible (various versions OK for comparison, but NRSV will be main one for reading, NASB for studying).
    3. Get list of names and how to contact (email preferred)
    4. 90 minutes on 4th Mondays at 7 p.m.
    5. Read passages (volunteers)
  - B. Does anyone have any questions/topics for us to consider for next time?
    1. .
    2. .
  - C. Last time we met we began a discussion on what the Bible says about salvation. We focused on the Old Testament and its “progressive revelation.”
    1. **Just to get us warmed up here, can someone remind us what progressive revelation is?** (God reveals more about self, salvation as time passes.)
    2. That means that when we are considering the context of any passage in order to understand it, we need to also pay attention to where we are in the history of progressive revelation.
    3. In general, then, what we read in the Old Testament can sometimes be a bit mysterious and is really only cleared up by the New Testament.
  - D. In the Old Testament we looked at a number of covenants that God made which *in theory* could have led to salvation from sin and death.
    1. God made a personal covenant with Adam, another with Noah, then with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to found the nation. None of them accomplished salvation because in one way or another each of these people failed.
    2. Then through Moses, God made a covenant with the whole nation of Israel, giving them a sort of handbook on holiness. But the whole nation spectacularly failed to live up to what they had promised. Salvation certainly wasn’t accomplished through them!
    3. Finally there was the covenant with King David; again the human side of the covenant came up short. But we did learn that God had narrowed the focus of progressive revelation. That the Savior would be from the Semites was narrowed to the descendants of Abraham, narrowed to Jacob’s line, narrowed to Judah’s lineage, and narrowed at last to be promised as David’s direct descendant.
    4. Today we know that descendant is Jesus.

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- II. Now we are ready for Salvation Part II: The New Testament.
- A. In our Old Testament study on salvation we talked about the fact that God punishes sin, because God is just, yet God forgives sin, because God is merciful. So how can God punish sin to satisfy justice, and at the same time forgive those same sins so we can receive the grace and mercy of salvation?
1. The answer, of course, is found uniquely in Jesus. In order for him to qualify to save human beings, two things must be true. We find them in many places, but let's just look at one for each:
  2. **Phil 2:5-6** ff **What does this say about the nature of Jesus?**
    - a. (was in very form of God . . . equality with God)
    - b. Only God can forgive sins and only God can give life. Jesus is fully God so he can remove sin and give eternal life (holiness always conquers sin).
  3. **1st Timothy 2:5** **What does this say about the nature of Jesus?**
    - a. (. . . one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as a ransom for all.)
    - b. Fully human so can take punishment on behalf of all human beings. He qualifies because he is one of us.
- B. Much, much more could be said on this and there are scores of passages of Scripture on these two facts alone (stay tuned on Sunday mornings!). But for today we will turn our focus to two questions: "How does Jesus save us?" and "Who does Jesus save?"
1. Let's begin with the question of how Jesus saves us.
  2. What is Jesus' role? And what, if anything, is our role?
- C. Salvation is by and through Jesus Christ. The Bible is very clear on this, as I think we are too, but let's look at a few passages that spell it out.
1. **Acts 2:22-24** (Impossible for death to hold him.) **Why was it impossible?** (vv. 25-31 God said that he would not be abandoned to death; v. 36 Jesus is Lord and Messiah/Christ)
  2. **Romans 3:22-25a** ( no distinction: *all* have sinned and fallen short.) **How does it say here that Jesus brings us salvation?** (Sacrifice of atonement *by his blood*.)
  3. **Romans 5:8-9** (while we were sinners, reconciled by Christ *by his blood*) **Again, what did Jesus do to save us?**
  4. **Ephesians 1:3-7** (In him we have redemption through his blood.) **How did Jesus redeem us?** (through his blood v. 7)
  5. Jesus himself spoke of it at his last supper. **Matthew 26:26-28** We looked last time at covenants with Adam, Abraham, Moses, and David. In one way or another they failed to win salvation. **What is different in this New Covenant? What is it based on?** (Blood, death of the one making the covenant.)
  6. Remember what we have already learned from our Old Testament study about the consequence of sin. **What is it we need salvation from?** (Death.) **How does that show up in what Jesus did for our salvation?** (He died in our places.) The consequence of sin is still death, but it is no longer *our* death, but Christ's death.

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- D. So, how is it that Jesus' death makes a difference for us?
1. Theologians have a lot of different ways of explaining it, of trying to figure out exactly how it happens.
  2. The Bible, however, doesn't give us a handy formula, and there is no one particular passage in the Bible that captures all of the meaning of his death. Instead we are given "pictures" and analogies and mystery. Let's read a few of those key passages that will help us at least to begin to sort it all out.
  3. **Hebrews 2:5-9, 14-17** **What does this tell us about the meaning of Jesus' death for us? How are we connected?**
    - a. Jesus is identified with us because he shared in all things just as we do.
    - b. He was one of us, so that qualifies him—and his death—to atone for our sins.
  4. **Galatians 3:23-29**
    - a. This passage is mostly showing that the Jewish law is not required for salvation.
    - b. But there is another point to be seen here. **What do vv. 27 and 29 say about our relationship with Christ through faith?** (As in Hebrews 2, we are identified with him: "clothed with Christ.")
  5. **Romans 5:12** (death through one man/Adam) **15-17** (gift of one man/Jesus brings life to many) **19-20** (the obedience of one makes the many righteous.)
    - a. This Romans passage on how Jesus' death frees us is one of the most important and one of the most difficult to understand.
    - b. There is a comparison—a contrast, really—being made between Adam and Jesus.
  6. The sin of Adam is contrasted with the obedience/sinlessness of Jesus.
    - a. The *consequence* of Adam's sin—death, especially spiritual death—is inherited by all who are "in Adam," who follow him, who are connected to him. (Essentially, all of us.)
    - b. In a similar way, the *consequence* of Jesus' sinless obedience is ultimately not death but "justification" and **life**.
    - c. But it is not merely an equal and opposite effect. Notice what it says in **verse 15**: "*Much more* surely have the grace of God and the grace of the one man Jesus Christ *abounded* for many." **Verse 17** emphasizes it again: "*much more surely* will those who receive the *abundance* of grace . . . exercise *dominion* in life."
    - d. Not only does Jesus reverse the curse, but he *overwhelmingly* reverses it for all those who now are "in Christ" through faith.
  7. We were united to Adam through our physical, biological connection. But with Jesus that connection is not physical; it is spiritual. So how do we know it's there? Well, we have outward and visible signs to show us. Let's read **Romans 6:1-11**.

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- a. **How are we identified with Christ? And how is it shown?** (in his death/baptism so now we can qualify to identify with him in his resurrection.)
- b. The part of this that is the wonder and mystery of God is that we do not have to physically die like Jesus. We don't have to be nailed to a cross.
- c. It is in our baptism (which includes our profession of faith; this was written about adults) that we accept Jesus' death as our own.
8. How, then, does Jesus' death make a difference for us? His death is our death and his life is our life. Through faith, then, we are so identified/united with him that his sinlessness is accounted to us and his resurrection becomes ours as well. He gives us a new life and a reborn spirit.
- E. We've been talking about Jesus' role in how we are saved, but there is a role for us too. It's a role of responding to what Jesus has done in dying for our sins. Our role in salvation is accepting the forgiveness that Jesus accomplishes and gives.
  1. Three major schools of thought have variations on this. But they come up short regarding our role in salvation:
  2. **Jesus saves us by teaching us how to live by a new ethic of love, service, humility. According to this view, our role is to be like Jesus.**
    - a. This is only a partial truth. We are to be like Jesus, but if Jesus is just our role model, this view has a major problem. **Can someone see what that might be?**
    - b. Problem: This can lead to the false notion of our salvation depending on ourselves.
    - c. If we are "good" enough, this says, we will be saved, but we can never know for sure if we have done enough good to outweigh the bad.
    - d. Let's look at just one of several possible passages that contradict this all-too-common misperception: **Ephesians 2:8-9** (by grace, not by works)
    - e. **So what can we conclude about this view of our role in salvation?**
  3. **A second, very popular view is that Jesus loves us all, therefore he saves all.**
    - a. This contains a measure of truth in that Jesus loves us, but the conclusion does not hold up.
    - b. This view relies on passages out of context like **1<sup>st</sup> John 4:8, 16** (God is love.) And various excerpts showing Jesus' love. In 1<sup>st</sup> John, of course, love of God is essential but **how is that love defined?** Let's read a little farther on: **1<sup>st</sup> John 5:1, 4-5** (it must be shown by faith in Jesus) And did Jesus simply accept everybody as they were? (Of course not! Example: **Mt. 23:15**)
    - c. The view of universal salvation is based on a sentimental definition of love as simply being emotionally attached to everyone without regard to faith or deeds or anything else.
    - d. Problem: shown in our OT study of salvation to be false.

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- e. Also leads to disregard for what we do or what we believe. We would be sure of ourselves and our salvation, but with no apparent difference between us and any other religion or no religion at all.
  - f. In fact there is a passage where Jesus directly answers this very question. Passage against: **Luke 13:22-30** (Will only a few be saved? Strive for narrow door.)
  - g. **How many does Jesus say will be saved?** (Does not say the number) **Does his answer tell us everyone will be saved?** (No, but tells us instead to be sure we are among the saved. Clearly then not all will be.)
4. **The third school of thought is that Jesus saves us depending solely on our profession of faith (sinner's prayer).**
- a. This is the strong emphasis among some evangelicals and it, too, contains a measure of truth, but not the whole truth.
  - b. **Acts 2:21** (Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.) This is often pointed to as evidence that calling on the name of the Lord is all that is required for salvation. **But, look at the context; is that what the meaning really is?** (No distinction is made between Jew/Gentile; i.e., it doesn't matter *who* calls on the name of the Lord.)
  - c. **Romans 10:9** (if you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth) is another prominent passage for this view. But look at the context here, too. **What is the topic in the conclusion of the paragraph (vv. 11-13)?** This whole section of Romans is concerned with the question of salvation for Gentiles as well as Jews, and the topic here is the same as in Acts 2:21. In addition we are told that heart and lips must be in agreement because the Jews Moses led gave lip service to faith in God, but their hearts proved otherwise. In fact that is the same problem as with this view of salvation as being dependent only on what we say/pray.
  - d. Problem: This can lead to "easy-believism," i.e., saving faith is what we say and claim to think and feel, not what we do. **James 2:14-17ff** is the classic passage on this. **What's the message there?**
  - e. Believing in salvation by simply saying the right prayer can lead to a disregard for living holy lives.
  - f. We could feel sure of our salvation, but bring disrepute upon Christ and Christianity by a casual regard for sin. That would hardly make anyone a new creation in Christ! (2 Cor 5:17)
  - g. **Luke 7:36-50** (Woman washes Jesus' feet with her tears.) **What does Jesus say about her?** (Jesus proclaims her faith has saved her.) **What did she say that made him notice her faith?** (She never says a word, but her **actions** spoke for her.) Notice, too, Jesus did not say her act of kindness or humility saved her. She wasn't saved by her actions, but her faith was shown in her actions. This is an important distinction.

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- h. (NOTE: Implications for those who have not heard of Jesus, but their actions speak of a heart after God.)
      - i. Let's pick out one more passage from the gospels that is even more direct on this topic. **Luke 6:43-45** (Jesus said that the saved will be known by their "fruit.") **What is Jesus saying here about our words, our beliefs, and our actions?** (All are tied in together.)
    - 5. That is a perfect summary of a true saving faith. Our role in our own salvation, then, is seen in our response to Jesus. Our faith—salvation is—shown, not by our words alone, not by our actions alone, nor by our beliefs alone, but by our beliefs that are heard in what we say and seen in what we do.
- III. In the last part of our study let's look at the question that bothers so many especially in our era of emphasis on pluralism and diversity: **Who** does Jesus save, and why?
  - A. Why would Jesus save some and not others? If he doesn't save all, is Jesus showing favoritism or some other -ism?
    - 1. This isn't a new concern.
    - 2. The key question in the early church was whether Gentiles could be saved without first becoming Jews. See **Acts 15:1-5**. The answer Peter gave is very instructive. **Acts 15:6-11**.
    - 3. Salvation is an act of the grace of God that is offered to Jew and Gentile alike.
    - 4. **Galatians 3:28** clearly echoes this. (No Jew/Greek, male/female, slave/free) There is no favoritism.
  - B. But isn't it favoritism to save people from only one religion?
    - 1. In fact the Bible doesn't delve much into other religions and what they believe as much as it focuses on what God says is true.
    - 2. Salvation is not about one organized religion vs another, but about faith in the God who is and in the Savior that God has sent. The question isn't about religion, it's about Jesus.
  - C. There are a number of passages that talk about salvation being uniquely found in Jesus.
    - 1. **Mt 1:20-21** (Call him Jesus, because he will save from sins. Jesus = Yah-shua = "God saves")
    - 2. **Acts 4:8-12** (Salvation is found in no one else. No other name given by which we may be saved.)
    - 3. **John 3:16-20** (Whoever believes may have life. Not believe is condemned already.) Context shows this applies to those who have been "exposed" to the light but have rejected it.)
    - 4. **John 10:7-13** (Good Shepherd. Whoever enters *through* him is saved.)
    - 5. **Col 1:15-23** (image of the invisible God, in him all the fullness of God, through him God reconciles all things.)

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6. It is not favoritism to say salvation is only through Jesus, because that is saying salvation is only through God. And that much people from every religion should already know.

## D. What about those who have heard about Jesus, but don't believe?

1. **John 12:42-50** Those who hear Jesus' words and keep them are saved, those who reject them are not saved.
2. **Romans 10:9ff** (Believe in your heart and confess with your mouth . . . and you will be saved.)
  - a. 10:14 is often thought of as a cry for help for those who have not heard of Jesus, but that is taking it out of context.
  - b. This is in the context of a discussion of Israel's rejection of Jesus (**Romans 10:1**).
  - c. **Had Israel heard? (Romans 10:18, 21)** And both they and we have been told again by Jesus and the apostles.
  - d. This is not simply a general principle that people cannot be saved if they have not heard; it is making the point that the Jews heard and still did not believe----to their loss.
3. The emphasis in this passage is not on those who haven't heard, but on faith in Jesus and his resurrection for those who have heard.
  - a. The emphasis is especially important here because the Jews were objecting to that very fact.
  - b. In addition the point here is that salvation is not by following the Jewish religious law, but by faith in Jesus. (The failure of the Law to save had already been shown in Romans 2 and 3.)
4. Finally, remember **Luke 6:43-45** What about those who reject Jesus? (They are also rejected.)
5. On this question there is no ambiguity. To knowingly reject Jesus for whatever reason is to reject God and to reject salvation.

## E. What about those who have never heard about Jesus or heard only a little?

1. This is probably the question that concerns or worries us the most. In fact it is the concern for those who have not heard that has spurred missionary movements again and again.
2. But if we don't want such people to be "lost"; to miss the salvation God has given, is it even remotely possible that God would care less?
  - a. As Abraham said to God, "Will not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25)
  - b. **1 Tim 2:3** "God desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."
  - c. **2 Peter 3:9** tells us that God is patient, "not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance."
  - d. God cares about the ones who haven't heard much more than we do.

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- F. The truth is that the Bible never tells us exactly what the spiritual condition will finally be for those who have not heard, but there are some hints.
1. In his sermon on salvation, John Wesley has pointed out some basic things the Bible does tell us.<sup>1</sup>
    - a. There must be some level of faith, even for those who have never heard of Jesus. **Hebrews 11:5-6** (Without faith it is impossible to please God.)
    - b. That faith must not simply be knowing there is God, but having actions and attitudes that are consistent with that faith:
    - c. **Luke 4:31-36** (Unclean spirits who know Jesus, but hate him.)
    - d. **James 2:18-22** (Demons believe and shudder, because they don't have actions consistent with faith, their "belief" is not faith.) Faith must also be trust, obedience, love. It is possible to believe in God, yet be an enemy of God. That is not faith.
  2. There are some more hints of hope that show the mercy we have come to expect from God.
    - a. **Luke 12:47-48** Jesus' parable about faithful and unfaithful servants was given to illustrate about his return. It gives us some insight into how the uninformed will fare. (The one who did wrong in ignorance receives a lesser punishment.)
    - b. And we are given insight into the end of the story. **Rev 7:9-10** **What people will be saved? Who will be left out?** (No nation, tribe, etc. omitted.)
- G. The truth is, we can't know for certain the spiritual condition of any other human being. Ultimately that is known only by God.
1. In **Luke 13:22-30** as we read earlier, when Jesus was asked if only a few would be saved, he didn't say who or how many. He only said we should "strive for narrow door.") It wasn't the question we should be asking.
  2. The question really should be, what do we do when we do hear? **Acts 17:30** (All are to repent now that we have heard.)
  3. We have been given our instructions about those who have not heard: **(Mt 28: 19-20)** <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.
  4. And we have been given the message to carry to the nations. [Give one reading to each of 4 readers.]
    - a. (1<sup>st</sup> Tim 1:15): "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

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<sup>1</sup> Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, before the University, on June 18, 1738.  
<http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/1/>

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- b. (Acts 4:12): “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”
- c. (1<sup>st</sup> Jn 4:9-10): God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him.
- d. In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us and sent his son to be an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”
- 5. As it says in Ephesians 3:20, “God is able to do abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine.”
  - a. God is fair and just and righteous and merciful. God will always do what is right.
  - b. For he did not send Jesus into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:17)

## IV. Summary

- A. Our goal today was to survey some of what the New Testament teaches us about how, who, and why Jesus saves.
  - 1. Have we done that satisfactorily?
  - 2. Are there still questions on this topic we need to discuss more?
- B. What questions for next time?
  - 1.
  - 2.
- C. Next meeting: Monday, February 26, 2007. 7:00 p.m.
- D. Closing prayer
- E. **Archives of class notes can be found online at: [www.fumcwa.org/classes/wdbsa](http://www.fumcwa.org/classes/wdbsa)**

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

Why evangelize? (1) Jesus told us to. (Mt 28); (2) It brings glory and honor to God/Jesus; (3) It brings joy and freedom to those who hear and believe; (4) It reveals to others their lack of faith so they may respond by creating moments of awareness and decision; (5) It eliminates any excuse people could use to accuse God of not being fair.

There is a radical difference in Jesus from anyone or anything else.

- 1. Remember our study in Leviticus about the spread of uncleanness?
- 2. What happened when someone touched another person or thing that was unclean? (**See Lev. 5:2-3**) Uncleanness was used in the Old Testament as a sign and symbol of sin, and it was highly contagious.
- 3. But look what happened when Jesus contacted someone unclean. **Mt 8:1-3**
- 4. This is one of the clearest pictures I can think of that shows what Jesus does. Sin/uncleanness contaminates everyone it contacts, but at the touch of Jesus—immediately it is gone.