

Storied Salvation
S. E. Rufener
2016 Theological Conference

Introduction

The phrase, “I’m saved,” the question, “Are you saved?” and the declaration, “They got saved!” are often heard within Christianity. The word ‘saved’ is a verb and therefore communicates action, i.e. to be “saved from something.”

“The word “salvation” connotes the fact that his [God’s] people were in trouble and needed rescuing.”¹

The modern Church has become so laden with terminology and cliché that the original message which the New Testament (NT) writers intended to communicate is obscured, if not entirely absent. While a palatable salvation makes for handy marketing, it has fostered ignorance of solid theology, exegesis, and the proper hermeneutical principles needed for interpretation. These often heard phrases are rarely helpful or accurate.

What exactly does “asking Jesus into one’s heart” mean? While some corroborate this vague notion with various “proof texts,” it is not a NT theme and is foreign to the Hebraic worldview out of which Jesus proclaimed his God-ordained message. The actual message of the NT is, “repent and believe in the Gospel of the Kingdom of God” (Mk 1:14-15, Acts 8:12).

“What then did Jesus intend to do? The alternative offered by many who dismiss the church as a bad mistake is simply that Jesus came to offer individuals a new way of salvation, or perhaps a new form of religion. This, of course, is equally anachronistic; individualism is a comparatively modern, and a largely western, phenomenon.”²

Phrasing the question in the past tense, “when *were* you saved” conveys the idea that one comes into possession of something that either *can* or *cannot* be lost. Perhaps a better question to ask is, “when *are* we saved”?

In the centuries following Jesus’ ministry, the Greek paradigm pervaded Christian thinking, which resulted in the long-expected, God-ruled, corporeal kingdom becoming a spiritualized, internal tranquility and a kingdom of the heart.

“The call to ‘believe in the gospel,’ or to ‘believe in me,’ does not suggest that Jesus was inviting Galilean villagers to embrace a body of doctrine—not even a basic ‘theory’ about ‘salvation’ and how they might attain it, nor, again, very much of a christology (though presumably it involved recognizing Jesus as a god-sent prophet like John). Nor does it suggest that Jesus was offering them what we would today call a new ‘religious experience.’ It evokes the historical picture of one who believed that, with his work, Israel’s god was inaugurating his long-awaited kingdom.”³

Due to this shift, salvation was ripped from its indigenous context and meaning then placed within the framework of this alternative “kingdom.”

Passages used in support this “spiritualization” theory are sparse and gravitate toward abusing solid interpretational principles. The imagery drawn from the Old Testament (OT) and its inherent theology (as well as the worldview of the NT writers) tells an entirely different story. The soteriological foundation provided therein renders it difficult to reconcile interpretations of the kingdom and salvation as being merely spiritual or other-worldly.

Salvation, while often interpreted today as an internal, spiritual phenomenon or state of being, had a much more political and tangible meaning in the first-century. In a broad sense, salvation had eschatological overtones which drew from well-known imagery in the Torah and the message of hope heralded throughout the Writings and Prophets.⁴

¹ N.T. Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision* (Downers Grove, IL.: IVP, 2009), 71.

² N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God*, Vol. 2 (Fortress Press, 1996), 275.

³ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁴ *Tanakh* (TNK) is an acronym for the three bodies of writing of which it is comprised. *Torah*, *Nevi’im* (the prophets) and *Ketuvim* (the writings). Using the phrase “Old Testament” has proven offensive to the Hebrew people, because in doing so Christians are stating (intentionally or not) that the New Testament is the new and improved version and they have the old one.

Salvation was intimately linked to resurrection and *parousia*⁵ theology. Inasmuch as salvation was an answer to sin, iniquity, missing the mark, or failure to obey the commands and statutes of the Lord, it was so on the basis of those things being one's subsequent undoing, which then culminated in separation and final condemnation. Either a person is subjected to the justice of God or is *saved* from it, i.e. life or death. The promise and hope of *Yahweh's* salvation was exemplified throughout the generations of Israel, reflecting the typology set earlier within their history.

Hebraic Context

Question: "Who or what is God?"

- Definition and Proposition

A Hebrew prefers truth in concrete *picture* or *story* language (metaphorical theology).

- Seeing the Outline and the Full Picture
- Observe the Larger Story Being Told
- The Significance of Typology

"Typology deals with the essential nature of salvation-history rather than general truths or spiritual trivialities. Much allegorical interpretation in modern preaching fits the latter category . . . In a sense it is also valid to speak of a typological relationship between NT imagery and its fulfillment in the eschatological promises of the end times."⁶

One must understand the world of the Bible and Jesus' Bible – the Old Testament – to know what it is he and the apostles taught and believed. Doing so does not minimize their words, but alternately puts them back in context where they have always belonged. The Hebrew conveys truth through the use of story and dramatic action, while at the same time communicating through picture and metaphor.

"If the way in which we understand salvific events . . . makes it incompatible with the great salvific actions of God in the Old Testament, then we . . . have an incomplete and deficient understanding of salvation. In other words, we have repeatedly heard that we must read the Old Testament in the light of the New, and that is true. But it is equally true that we must learn how to read the New Testament in the light of the Old."⁷

Writers of the NT presume their readers have an intimate familiarity with the OT and that they will detect the parallels between archetypes and antitypes. Keil and Delitz summarized it simply and adequately: "The Old Testament is the basis of the New."⁸ The worldviews many maintain today are not due to explicit biblical teaching, but exceedingly evolved out of – and entirely dependent on – later tradition.

"The Old Testament does communicate to us and it was written for us, and for all humankind. But it was not written to us. It was written to Israel. It is God's revelation of himself to Israel and secondarily through Israel to everyone else . . . when we read a text written in another language and addressed to another culture, we must translate the culture as well as the language if we hope to understand the text fully. . . . It is far too easy to let our own ideas creep in and subtly (or at times not so subtly) bend or twist the material to fit our own context."⁹

Walton goes on to say that there is a desire to have the Bible address many of the modern ideas found in today's dialogue. The problem is, when imposing our issues, ways of thinking, and era upon the text, we distort it in the process. In so doing, the Bible's message becomes subjected to *cultural imperialism*.

Identifying the Problem

The word "salvation" has a wide semantic range, and throughout the NT the emphasis varies. In the Gospels for instance, Jesus performs miracles where he said, "your faith has saved you." In contexts

⁵ "Coming," "presence" "arrival." "For the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah" Mat 24:37.

⁶ "The term that best expresses this balance is 'promise-fulfillment.' The OT type is promissory and the NT antitype fulfills or 'fills to the full' the divine purpose implicit in the earlier event. . . . NT writers could see many parallels between Jesus and the religious experiences of Israel . . . without necessitating any 'deeper' thrust in the earlier passage." Geoffrey W. Bromiley, "Type: Typology," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988; 2002), 4:931. See also, C.A Evans and L. Novakovic, "Typology," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, 2d ed. (IVP Academic, 2013), 986.

⁷ Justo L. González, *The Story Luke Tells: Luke's Unique Witness to the Gospel* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), 67.

⁸ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch., *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10 vols. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 1:xii.

⁹ John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (IVP Academic, 2009), 7, 19.

such as these, salvation has an undeniably strong physical component. Within that worldview however, the dualism of *physical* and *spiritual* which pervades modern thinking was largely absent.

Christianity has seemingly devoted little energy to speaking about or investigating the political aspect and origin of salvation. Salvation is seen instead as a *spiritual phenomenon*, (i.e. “are you saved”) of which an individual can gain possession. The questions then needing to be asked are:

- From *what* is one saved and *when*?
- *How* and *why* does salvation occur?
- *Who* is the object of its action and *whence* is it derived?

There are, without question, numerous ways to speak about and discuss salvation. The point to be made is that salvation is most commonly described as a soul saved *from* sins and ultimately from eternal torment *for* eternal bliss.

Thus, “getting saved” is explained through the means of “confessing Jesus as your personal Lord and savior” and praying for forgiveness. If salvation is interpreted as a summation of an entire life, then this would render everyone guilty and impure. And if salvation is likened to a certification of merits earned, then no one is going to be saved. Therefore, some theologians postulate that salvation is completely a work of God, having absolutely *no* human involvement. It’s God who elects, keeps, cleans, and saves - end of story. This is interpreted as something that happens entirely in the past and does not depend on what my relationship with God looks like *today*. *Now*, the theory goes, is never in question, nor does it matter. In this view, salvation becomes a matter of God giving soteriological tenure. It’s made into a *thing* that’s “mine,” I own it, my gate-pass which was provided through the cross to ensure *me* a place in the afterlife.

“Mention salvation, and almost all Western Christians assume that you mean going to heaven when you die. But a moment’s thought, in the light of all we have said so far, reveals that this simply cannot be right. Salvation means, of course, rescue. But what are we ultimately to be rescued from? The obvious answer is death. But if, when we die, all that happens is that our bodies decompose while our souls (or whatever other word we want to use for our continuing existence) go on elsewhere, this doesn’t mean we’ve been rescued from death. It simply means that we’ve died.”¹⁰

The Scriptures present a different picture, one where believers are encouraged to stay strong, hold fast, pursue righteousness, endure to the end and encourage each other in “hope of salvation”¹¹ all the more as they “see the day approaching.”¹²

The Solution

- Old Testament Context
- The Story
- Natural Theology

A reformation in our thinking regarding this crucial subject is needed. This can only happen when:

- God is placed at the center of the salvation message which is where Jesus always placed him.
- It is defined in the proper biblical context which places it at the center and the goal of God’s soteriological project for humanity, culminating in the restoration of sound government on earth under the leadership of the God appointed Davidic King along with the saints.

“When God is the source of ‘salvation’ in the Hebrew Bible the meaning is overwhelmingly physical rather than spiritual, and in this life rather than in some afterlife (Exod. 14. go; 2 Sam. 8.6; Ps 44.8; 144.10; Isa. 59.16; Zeph. 8.17). It is difficult to stress this too much, since Christian readers of the Bible especially have understandably read back into the Hebrew Bible the spiritual and eschatological nuances of the concept of salvation found in the New Testament. Despite the fact that in a great majority of the occurrences of the root *yš* in the Hebrew Bible God is the agent of ‘salvation,’ it rarely if ever has an unambiguously spiritual nuance. An eschatological sense is of course present in such passages as Ezekiel 84.22 and throughout Second Isaiah,

¹⁰ N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (London: SPCK, 2007), 206.

¹¹ 1 Thes 5:7-9; 2 Thes 2:12-17.

¹² 1 Thes 4:18; 5:8-11, 14; Heb 3:13-14; 10:23-25.

but the ‘salvation’ prophesied is the restoration of Israel in its land, not some other-worldly bliss. Even in the New Testament salvation can be physical and this-worldly.”¹³

Salvation: Old Testament Context

God has always been in the business of delivering. The stories in the Bible describe the salvation effected by God in unique ways. He saved righteous Noah and family with an ark, suspending them above the chaotic, watery justice brought about due to the wickedness of humanity. He delivered a man out of a wicked city through the agency of not only angelic messengers, but a loyal, persistent and bargaining uncle. He preserved a baby at the hands of godly midwives, a creative mother and compassionate princess by floating another ark¹⁴ above the graves of Hebrew babies who were fed to the crocodile river-gods. This baby was saved to be a savior.

“The primary meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words translated ‘salvation’ is non-religious. Thus, the derivatives of the Hebrew root *yš* are used frequently in military contexts as of victories by Gideon (Judg. 8.22), Samson (Judg. 15.18), Jonathan (1 Sam. 14.45), and David (1 Sam. 28.5; 2 Sam. 19.3); of projected defeats of Aram (2 Kings 19.17) and of the enemies of Gibeon (Josh. 10.6); and of victory in general. In fact, recent translations often translate nominal derivatives of *yš* with ‘victory.’”¹⁵

Salvation was deliverance in real, experiential ways.¹⁶

“In general, the root *yš* implies bringing help to people in the midst of their trouble rather than in rescuing them from it. It is almost exclusively theological term with Yahweh as its subject and his people as its object. The root’s specifically theological usage concerns the acts of God’s salvation in Israel’s history (65x). Not surprisingly, forms of *yš* bracket the report of the OT’s paradigmatic salvation-event, the Exodus (Exod 14).”¹⁷

It is vital to realize that the NT authors wrote with the expectation that the hope which had been promised was in the process of being fulfilled. They were not redefining what God promised, but interpreting what they saw in light of Messiah.¹⁸ Here are two passages that illustrate the existing breach between the way salvation is often portrayed today and its NT application:

“Knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed” Rom. 13:11.¹⁹

“So also the Messiah, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him” Heb. 9:28 CSB.²⁰

“[Salvation:] acts whereby God delivers his people from distress. The term occurs frequently in biblical and liturgical texts (cf. *Gn.* 49.18; *Ex.* 14.13, 14.30) and in the prophetic books, particularly in *Isaiah* (cf. *Is.* 45.17, ‘*Israel is saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation*’), and in *Psalms*, but almost always refers to deliverance from concrete and specific sufferings, such as oppression and exile. It is not used in connection with the remission of sin, atonement and the like. The noun *moshi a* (savior) is occasionally used for the leaders sent by God to succor the people in times of distress (cf. *Jgs.*) but is generally applied only to God (Prophets; *Ps.*). A favorite image is that of the sprouting or flourishing of salvation (cf. The second and fifteenth benedictions of the Amidah, ‘Who causes the horn of salvation to flourish’), which is connected with the idea of the messianic sprouting of the ‘shoot of David.’”²¹

Covenant

Although it is not the primary interest here, and beyond the scope of this inquiry, the subject of covenant – as it pertains to the context of salvation-history – cannot be overlooked.

¹³ Samuel A. Meier and Bruce M. Metzger, “Salvation,” *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 669-70.

¹⁴ Heb. *Tevah* - Two “arks,” Gen 6:14, Exo 2:3, both instruments of salvation.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Isa 45:21,22; 49:6; 51:5; 59:16; 62:11; Lam 3:25-26, Jon 2:9; Mic 7:7; Hab 3:18, etc.

¹⁷ William A. VanGemeren, “*יָשׁוּעַ*,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 1997), 2:556. “The root *yš* is most at home Israel’s cultic literature. The Psalter accounts for almost 40 percent of its total occurrences (136x), nearly half of the psalms having at least one example.” *Ibid.*, 2:559.

¹⁸ Acts 4:12; Rom 10:9-13.

¹⁹ Unless otherwise noted, citations are taken from the NASB.

²⁰ “So too Messiah – having been sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people, will be seen again, not to deal with sin, but for these who are eagerly awaiting him, to gain their salvation.” Heb 9:28 OGFOMM, A. Buzzard.

²¹ R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder, “Salvation,” *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), 602.

“The word ‘salvation’ would denote, to a first-century Jew, the hope . . . particularly in terms of Israel’s rescue, by her god, from pagan oppression. This would be the gift of Israel’s god to his whole people, all at once. Individual Jews would find their own ‘salvation’ through their membership within Israel, that is, within the covenant; covenant membership in the present was the guarantee (more or less) of ‘salvation’ in the future.”²²

Ultimate salvation and the protection of God over his people was as secure as his covenant. He saves and forgives his people because he promised to do so. He will bring peace and restoration due to covenant fulfillment.

The Story: Exodus - a Typology

- Chaos, Evil, Bondage and Misery
- The Chosen Leader and Partner of God
- Dramatic Victory of God Over the Anti-Kingdom
- Rescue Through Sacrifice and Faith
- New Calling and Way of Life in Redemption
- Presence of God
- The Garden of God Restored

“When we read the Old Testament, we must read it—as it manifestly asks to be read—as the long and winding story of how God chose a people to take forward his plan to rescue his creation, not the story of how God had a shot at calling a people whom he would save from the world and how this was aborted, forcing him to try something else (a caricature, I know, but one many will recognize). And this means that though the Old Testament must be read as part of ‘our story’ as Christians, we must not imagine that we are still living within that moment in the story. The story itself points beyond itself, like a set of parallel lines meeting in the infinitely rich narrative of the gospels and the sudden outburst of new life in Acts and the letters.”²³

The Exodus event was perhaps the foremost involvement of Israel’s God, which resulted in shaping the theology of Israel and the movement of salvation-history. *Yahweh* choosing Israel as a special people for a unique covenant-relationship with him made his promises hold great significance within their interpretation.²⁴ This God had become involved in Israel’s plight, saved them, and would continue to do so in indubitable ways. The story itself is revelation and illustrates God’s purpose and resolve to restore man and enter into relationship with him.

“Some argue that the concept of salvation/deliverance is the unifying plot of the Bible. This divine rescue found its paradigm in the deliverance of God’s people from Egypt, persisted with military victories over enemies, and eventually was articulated in worship literature. Building on theological, historical and cultural themes such as these, the understanding of salvation in the prophetic books continues to find expression. God is still the one, the only one, who accomplishes salvation for his people, but they are rescued from even higher powers, those of God’s wrath in their own sin, and delivered to an even greater and, that of eternal salvation.”²⁵

God saves and is savior, but has more often than not used human agency to accomplish this.

Passover is perhaps the oldest religious festival to perpetually be celebrated. While the story of salvation has its roots beyond 3500 years ago, the story that was integral to the world of Jesus continues to be told and provide a portrait of God’s saving power. This story is first and foremost about salvation.

The Setting

Egypt was an anti-kingdom, and Israel was under its oppression. Deuteronomy speaks of Israel as being *Yahweh*’s inheritance, how he found, cared and guarded them, spreading his wings over them in protection. Other places make reference to how they sacrificed to demons and served other gods their fathers did not *know*.²⁶ Exodus starts off informing readers:

²² N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God*, Vol. 1 (Fortress Press, 1992), 334.

²³ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 206.

²⁴ Exo 6:6-8. The four promises are still acted out today: 1) I will bring you out; 2) I will set you free; 3) I will redeem you; 4) I will take you. Metaphorically the images evoked in the narrative are familial: firstborn, bride, marriage etc.

²⁵ Mark J. Boda, J. Gordon McConville, “Salvation, Deliverance,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets* (IVP, 2012), 692.

²⁶ Eze 20:5-18 contains *Yahweh*’s polemic against them: “do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt (v. 7); [they] did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt (v. 8); their heart continually went after their idols (v. 16); [to the children he pled] do not . . . defile yourselves with their idols (v. 18); their eyes were on the idols of their fathers (v. 24).” This is repeated throughout the prophets, reminding Israel

“A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph” Exo 1:8.

The text says the people *cried* out without specifying as to *whom* they cried, but it was their God who heard and responded.²⁷

“They cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God.” Exo 2:23.

The story indicates that Moses was informed of God’s “name,” having previously known him as *El Shaddai* (3:6, 13-15; 6:2-3).²⁸ The Psalmist would later say of the God of Israel:

“They [the righteous] cry out, and the LORD hears, and saves them from all their troubles” (Ps 34:18 TNK).

God’s Direction

Before God ever came to Moses and commissioned him as an authorized dealer of salvation, Moses had been prepared as a shepherd.

“God is the primary agent of deliverance, but often God is portrayed as working with or through a divinely appointed leader.”²⁹

In the Ancient Near East (ANE), names had great significance, more than just arbitrary sets of sounds. Moses’ name gives indication of a substantial role in deliverance. While his name has a wide semantic range of possibilities within Egyptian and Hebraic tradition, the text’s direct reference (Exo 2:10) and verbal word play of “drawn-out”³⁰ is hard to ignore. Though he was “drawn-out” of the water, his destiny of drawing the people of Israel “out of Egypt” can be seen not necessarily as a linguistic derivative, but rather an interpretive one.³¹

Moses is portrayed numerous times as having compassion on those in need of deliverance:

“The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock” (Exo 2:17 ESV, also 2:11-12).

He was given explicit direction from *Yahweh* and was sent off with Aaron to deliver the message that salvation was on its way. The covenant-keeping, savior-God of Israel was in action and they were about to witness it.³²

Belief, Faith, Acceptance, Action and Participation

The people witnessed the acts of God in Egypt as he set himself above all the other gods by systematically undoing creation and overturning their order by ushering in chaos (*Isfet*).³³ Israel had

how God found them, took them out cared for them and how they have responded to his kindness toward them. (cf. Jos 24:14; 2 Sa 7:23; Hos 11). It took one day for Israel to come out of Egypt, but forty years for Egypt to come out of Israel.

²⁷ The word “cry” is modest. This word (יָצַעַ) means to call out for help in a wailing, bitter desperate and perhaps weeping manner. It can be accompanied by public display of physical pain and emotional anguish. In the Davidic Psalm 22, the writer alludes to Israel’s call upon *Yahweh* by using the same verb in the Psalm (22:4-5) that Jesus would later quote when hanging on the cross “crying” out in anguish, desperation, pain and emotion to God. The context of both the stories is that God hears this “cry” and responds accordingly.

²⁸ “His statement does not suggest that the patriarchs had never been introduced to the name *Yahweh*, but that he had not fulfilled that role in their experience. . . . *Yahweh* was not presented as a name they had never heard of before, but as a name representing a function that they had not as yet experienced. The god *Yahweh* who had made promises of land to their forefathers was now ready to function in that implied capacity – he was forming a relationship with the family of Abraham (Exod. 19:3-6; Lev. 26:12) and was electing them as a people to populate the land.” John Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Baker Academic, 2006), 92-3. This is also reflected in the Yahwistic derivation of Moses’ mother’s name *Yokheved* (יְהוֹכָבֵד - Exo 6:2, Num 26:59).

²⁹ Bill T. Arnold, H.G.M. Williamson, “Salvation and Deliverance,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*, (IVP, 2005), 851.

³⁰ Cf. Walton, Matthews and Chavalas, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, (IVP Academic, 2000), 77.

³¹ Pharaoh drowns the Hebrew children; God in turn drowns Pharaoh’s army and kills his firstborn. “As a whole, the incident anticipates future events: as Pharaoh designs to drown Israel’s helpless boys in the reedy Nile, from which Moses is rescued, so *Yahweh* and Moses will save Israel from Egypt at the Reed Sea, where Egypt’s mighty men perish. Pharaoh’s daughter, though a minor character, thus symbolizes God; her maidservant corresponds to Moses. Even Moses’ name, if understood as Hebrew, ought to mean, not “rescued from the water,” but “rescuer from the water,” foreshadowing Moses’ role in Israel’s deliverance (cf. Isa. 63:11).” David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers and Astrid B. Beck, “Moses,” *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 919.

³² “Israel must believe Moses as Moses must believe *Yahweh*. As Moses is to be the medium of the message to Israel, so Israel is to be the medium of the message to the world (19:4–6). And the message? It is that God Is, and so is actively present in a world that belongs to him.” John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Exodus*, 61 vols. (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 3:46.

³³ *Maat* and its counterpart *Isfet* are similar to the Hebraic *shalom* and *chaos*. It was the gods who were the deciding factors of *Isfet* and *Maat*. It was the duty of the Pharaoh to maintain the gods. If there was chaos (*Isfet*) it was ultimately Pharaoh’s failure.

been acquainted with the other gods for centuries. The choice was set before them: they could believe in the signs given to authenticate Moses and who he represented or face the judgment being brought upon the *beastly* Egyptian system. If they wanted to be a part of what this God was promising to do, they had to accept in faith that Moses' message was authentic and the covenant-God of their ancestor Abraham was indeed at work to bring about their redemption and deliverance. The authority of *Yahweh* vested in Moses is vital, which is represented, at least in part, by the emphasis and amount of significance placed on *staff*.³⁴ Should the Israelites choose to enter into this belief, they would have to act upon the message that Moses was delivering and enter into the plan of action that *Yahweh* himself was providing through him. This included placing their lives in harm's way (Exo 8:26; 12:3).³⁵

Escape and Deliverance

The act of obedience brought all who did so under the protection of *Yahweh*, keeping them from the judgment being unleashed upon the Egyptians.

"The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" Exo 12:13, 23.

While they were actually saved at the moment the angel saw the blood and passed over, they were *practically* saved when they believed God's promise (with accompanying signs) and acted accordingly in obedience through the word of God's anointed savior. Keil and Delitzsch eloquently framed it:

"The smearing of the door-posts and lintel became a sign to Israel of their deliverance from the destroyer. Jehovah made it so by His promise, that He would see the blood, and pass over the houses that were smeared with it. **Through faith in this promise, Israel acquired in the sign a firm pledge of its deliverance.**"³⁶

God's people had cried out to him; he brought about deliverance, thus setting his delivered people apart from the Egyptians who were "wailing" for the failure of their gods to protect them. God had *executed judgment against all the gods of Egypt* (Exo 12:12).

After leaving Egypt, Pharaoh pursued and Israel became trapped at the sea.³⁷ The people began to panic and this time, it states, they "cried to *Yahweh*." Moses responded:

"Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today" Exo 14:13.

Moses, as the servant of *Yahweh*, was commanded to lift his staff and stretch out his hand over the sea and divide it. Moses obeyed, but the power and action was *Yahweh's*. The people passed through the sea and emerged on the other side as a *new creation*, as it would later be interpreted.³⁸ *Yahweh* had saved his people (v. 30) and they in turn believed in him and his servant Moses (v. 31).³⁹ The JPS translation, *The Tanakh* renders the last verse, "they had faith in the LORD."

"'Faith' in the Hebrew Bible is not a belief in a doctrine or subscription to a creed. Rather, it refers to trust and loyalty that find expression in obedience and commitment."⁴⁰

³⁴ Throughout the story, the *staff* (God's, Moses' and Aaron's) had the role of representing the authority of God vested in Moses. This is in opposition to the staff of Pharaoh, which represented his divine kingship. The "staff of God" is superior to that of Pharaoh and the magicians', illustrated by Aaron's staff swallowing the magicians' staffs; it was not a battle of serpents but authority – Moses' staff (i.e. God's) against Pharaoh's. Exo 12:12, *Yahweh* pledged to "execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt."

³⁵ With the sacrifice of a ram (sheep) or bull, the Israelites were being commanded to oppose the highest and most powerful deities of Egypt; Ammon and Osiris. To abuse these sacred animals was treacherous and abominable. "The reason for this commandment is that the constellation of Aries (the Ram) is at the height of its power in the month of Nisan [month of Passover]. . . . Therefore He commanded us to slaughter the sheep and to eat it in order to inform us that it was not by the power of that constellation that we went out from Egypt, but by decree of the Supreme One. And according to the opinion of our Rabbis that the Egyptians worshipped it as a deity, He has all the more informed us through this that He subdued their gods and their powers at the height of their ascendancy." Ramban (Nachmanides), *Commentary on the Torah: Exodus*, Trans. Charles Chavel (Brooklyn, NY.: Shilo Publishing House, 1973), 118-9. See also *The Chumash: The Torah, Haftaros and Five Megillos*, Stone ed. (Brooklyn, NY.: Mesorah Publications, 2009), 332, 350.

³⁶ Keil and Delitzsch, 1:329

³⁷ Exo 15:4 *yam suph*.

³⁸ Egypt has been depicted as the womb and the sea as a birth canal and was therefore interpreted as "new birth" or "new creation" (Eze 16). It was at that moment they were born as a people. No longer were they slaves. Up to that point, they were runaway slaves from Egypt, now they were set-free. "It was baptism," says Paul (1 Cor 10).

³⁹ This formula is used to allude to Jesus as the "prophet like Moses" (Deut 18) ushering in *Yahweh's* salvation for Israel again: "'Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me'" (John 14:1). "They believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses" Exo 14:31.

⁴⁰ Nahum Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus* (The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 75.

The next scene depicts a victorious song being sung by the people after the great deliverance by *Yahweh* from their enemies. Revelation 14 has God's people again singing this song, who like Israel before, are delivered by God from their enemies, through his servant.

"In Exod. 14:13 Israel's role in order to receive 'the deliverance the Lord will bring' is that of trusting response; the exodus provides a pattern: 'and Moses said to the people, 'fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which she will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be still.' Here the salvation in question is an earthly and historical one. S. R. Driver suggests that salvation and deliverance 'seldom, if ever, express a spiritual state *exclusively*: their common theological sense in Hebrew is that of a *material deliverance attended by spiritual blessings* (e.g. Is. 12, 2; 45, 17).' But certain passages in the prophets have an eschatological dimension. For example, in the last days *Yahweh* will bring full salvation for his people (e.g. Isa. 43:5-13; Jer. 31:7 = LXX 38:7; Zechariah. 8:7). Then Israel 'will draw water from the wells of salvation' (Isa. 12:3); The whole world will share in this salvation (45:22; 49:6)."⁴¹

Salvation: New Testament Application Built on Old Testament Foundations

As a result of the revelation God had given the prophets and from the experience Israel had in her relationship with *Yahweh*, their covenant-God, the belief developed that God had acted and would continue to act within history on their behalf, culminating in a time in the future when all would be set right. The belief of "salvation-history"⁴² was integral within the worship of *Yahweh*. It is crucial to understand that the way in which the NT uses salvation is fashioned from the fabric of OT storied salvation brought about by the God of Israel.

"A word is necessary at this point about the meaning of the term 'salvation' in the context of the Jewish expectation. . . . There can be little thought of the rescue of Israel consisting of the end of the space-time universe, and/or of Israel's future enjoyment of a non-physical, 'spiritual' bliss. That would simply contradict creational monotheism, implying that the created order was residually evil, and to be simply destroyed. . . . Rather, the 'salvation' spoken of in the Jewish sources of this period has to do with rescue from the national enemies, restoration of the national symbols, and a state of shalom in which every man will sit under his vine or fig-tree. 'Salvation' encapsulates the entire future hope. If there are Christian redefinitions of the word later on, that is another question. For first-century Jews it could only mean the inauguration of the age to come, liberation from Rome, the restoration of the Temple, and the free enjoyment of their own Land."⁴³

Jesus

Names are generally nothing more than phonetic sounds in our twenty-first century culture and therefore the truly profound and complex importance of names in ancient eastern culture is not easily understood.⁴⁴ Jesus' Hebrew name is *Yeshua*, which in the language, is an obvious word play. His name is the masculine form of the feminine word *y'shuah* meaning "salvation." Matthew 1:21 has it:

"[Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus [*Yeshua*] because he will save his people from their sins."

In the Septuagint, the Greek word used to translate the name Joshua is *Jesus*, the same word used to transliterate the word Jesus. It is probable that the idea of Jesus' name being the same as Joshua was derived here. It is similar, but not the same. Joshua (*Yehoshua*) means "*Yahweh* is salvation" or "*Yahweh* saves." Joseph (G. Matthew) and Mary (G. Luke) are given instruction to name this child Jesus (*Yeshua*) because of the Hebrew verb play⁴⁵ "to save, to deliver." His name thus reveals God's intentions for him, as Moses' name did for him.

"Beneath the OT's use of explicit salvation language lies a coherent worldview in which the exodus from Egyptian bondage, followed by entry into the promised land, forms the most important paradigm or model. . . . Furthermore, the exodus 'constitutes the sociopolitical deliverance of a community from the real, concrete

⁴¹ Colin Brown, "σώζω," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Gen. ed., 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan), 3:208; Verlyn D. Verbrugge, "σώζω," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Abridged Version (Zondervan, 2000), 549.

⁴² In theology known as "*Heilsgeschichte*."

⁴³ Wright, *People of God*, 300.

⁴⁴ For the significance of names relating to the destiny of individuals, see Geoffrey W. Bromiley, "Name; Names, Proper," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988; 2002), 3:481, 485-86.

⁴⁵ See R. Laird Harris, Robert Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer and Bruce K. Waltke, "2405 יָשׁוּעַ," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999, c1980), 934.

situation of oppression . . . [and thus] resists any 'spiritualizing' of salvation, keeping it firmly rooted in life in this world . . . God's saving activity . . . has to do with deliverance from oppressive social, economic, and political realities . . . The continuation of the story of salvation thus captures all aspects of human existence: from history to community to political affairs and daily life. . . . Not to be overlooked amidst the lengthy story reviews are the brief historical reminders of the exodus that punctuate many of the prophets' words as modifiers. . . . The historical event is also used as a kind of time stamp by which the audiences can orient themselves: 'As in the days when you came out of Egypt, I will show them my wonders. . . . **This story of salvation from the past has a profound impact on the prophets' understanding of future salvation.**'⁴⁶

God as Savior

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope" 1Tim 1:1.

God the Father, *Yahweh*, is savior.⁴⁷ The emphasis in evangelical Christianity has been to view Jesus as the means of salvation, our personal lord and savior, the atonement, our ransom, and he being the one from whom we must beg forgiveness. In this sense, he has become the *object* of faith for many, having their soteriological fixation upon him. Appealing to the Trinity – where Jesus is God and therefore both Jesus and the Father can be called "savior" in the same sense – may seem to resolve the issue for some. The problem is that none of the NT writers ever make this claim. Not only is God the savior in this text, but throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. There is no question that Paul knows Jesus' role in God's salvation-history and it is also evident that he makes a distinction between them. Paul – whose Bible was the OT – has drawn his perspective from there, not from Augustine. God saves, the Messiah delivers carries it out.⁴⁸

"God's work as Creator (whether recognized or not) actually and always precedes God's work as Redeemer. Moreover, God's redemptive work does not put an end to God's creative work; God's work as Creator continues through and beyond such historical redemptive actions. The language of 'salvation' has reference to both the effects of redemptive actions as well as to the effects of distinguishable acts of continuing creation (e.g., healing; gifts of food and water in the wilderness). Redemption does not do away with the life-giving effects of the Creator but stands in the service of them. The objective of God's work in *redemption* is to free people to be what they were *created* to be, the effect of which is named salvation."⁴⁹

Matthew

Matthew 2 tells the story of Joseph, Mary and Jesus' flight into Egypt. The writer is explicit in his use of the phrase "out of Egypt I called my son", but much less so in what he intends by it. His citation relates to fleeing *into* Egypt, not *from* it. The exodus *out of Egypt*⁵⁰ resonates profoundly within the identity of Israel, so much so that Matthew is able to say a lot about Jesus at the outset of his narrative without spelling it out.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Mark J. Boda, J. Gordon McConville, "Salvation, Deliverance," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets* (IVP, 2012), 693.

⁴⁷ 2 Sa 22:3; Ps 17:7; 106:21; Isa 43:3, 11; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8; Jer 14:8; Hos 13:4; Luke 1:47; 1 Tim 2:3; 4:10; Tit 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Jud 1:25.

⁴⁸ Atonement theories must also be taken into consideration on account of what Jesus' death did in securing salvation. For instance, some have Jesus paying a debt for humanity thereby saving man from God. A helpful example is the responsible party for the Exodus event. Obviously, the power was *Yahweh's*, since Moses was a man, but still the text interchanges between Moses' action and that of *Yahweh* in numerous places. Here is an example: "You yourselves have seen what I [*Yahweh*] did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself [*Yahweh*]" Exo 19:4. Yet when speaking to Moses, *Yahweh* said, "your [Moses'] people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt" Exo 32:7 (cf. Num 21:5).

⁴⁹ Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Abingdon Press, 2005), 10.

⁵⁰ Exo 13:9, 14, 16; 18:1; 19:4, Num 23:20; 24:8; Deut 9:26; 16:1; 26:8; Jos 24:6; Jdg 6:8-9; 1 Sam 12:1.

⁵¹ In context (of Hosea 11), it is obvious that God had called his "son," Israel, out of Egypt (Exo 4:22-23). The Matthean author does not make mention of this passage blindly or in an unjustifiable out-of-context use, he is far more sophisticated than that. Matthew (and other gospels) makes it clear to his readers that Jesus is undeniably the prophet like Moses from Deut 18. The details given (even numbers) of how Jesus did almost exactly as Moses did, even down to the way he divided the people to feed them (something Moses did in the wilderness) are to take the reader back to the Torah in subtle ways. Most of what he did and said comes right out of the OT. We have (in general) failed to recognize it or make the connections because we don't know the OT well. As the "new Moses" and ultimate representative of Israel, Jesus relives many of the same experiences described in the Torah that happened to Israel (God's first-born: Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son' Exo 4:22): Jesus survives a gruesome infanticide by a wicked king, has compassion on the people, divides them in groups of hundreds and fifties, in the wilderness alone for 40 days (Israel 40 years), instructed people on a mountain, climbs a mountain with only his closest companions and has visions of glory and light, chooses twelve disciples (12 tribes), offers himself in the peoples stead among many other nuances. In this knowledge it should not be surprising that Matthew makes Jesus appear as the ultimate son who is a *firstborn*, as he does with Mary as the ultimate "virgin Israel."

“On the surface it is of course not at all obvious how Hosea 11:1 is fulfilled in Jesus escaping from Egypt. But as one reflects more deeply on Jesus relationship to Israel one starts to see how profound the sense might be in which Jesus, fulfills God’s call of his people out of Egypt. *Out of Egypt* is this useful shorthand for evoking the challenges *and* the richness of biblical theology.”⁵²

Matthew’s soteriology is saturated with hints of resurrection, not only of Jesus but a wider resurrection of the saints.⁵³ Matthew is the only Gospel to use the phrase “*parousia* of the son of man.”⁵⁴

“Matthew 19:25 and parallels must refer to ‘final salvation.’ It is about a future state of being saved as opposed to being lost, and in the imagery of the Gospels signifies entry to the heavenly banquet instead of exclusion, a welcome by the Son of man and entry to the heavenly kingdom instead of rejection and consignment to eternal fire. . . . This raises the question whether ‘being saved’ refers exclusively to a future state in the next world, or whether it can also refer to those who are already sure of entry to the kingdom.”⁵⁵

“Matthew also adopts the other strand of Mark’s soteriology: *sōzō* designates the saving of life within an eschatological horizon (Mt 16:25; 19:25; see also Mt 10:22, 24:13, 22) or salvation from God’s final judgment and eternal punishment (Mt 13:41-43; 16:27-28, 19:28, 24:29-31, 37-41; 25:31-46; see also Mt 8:11-12; 10:28)-that is, eschatological life (Mt 7:14; 10:39, 16:25-26; 18:8-9; 19:16-17, 29; 25:46) and participation in the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:20; 7:21; 13:43; 18:3-4; 19:23-24; 21:31; see also Mt 5:3-12; 19:12).”⁵⁶

Recognition that it is the judging acts of God from which we are saved – to be poured-out in its time at the “end of the age” – is a crucial distinction to make in the NT’s treatment of salvation.

“It is ecclesiology (membership in God’s people) as the advance sign of soteriology (being saved on the last day). It is ‘justification’ in the present, anticipating the verdict of the future. God will declare on the last day that certain people are ‘in the right,’ by raising them from the dead; and that verdict has been brought forward into the present, visibly and community-formingly.”⁵⁷

So we are “saved” from a day yet unseen. It is very much akin to the exodus from Egypt. The Hebrews were not “saved” until the death angel “passed over,” but they were “marked for salvation” when they believed and acted in obedience (a byproduct of belief). Today, salvation has been reduced to “a decision for Jesus” which is shallow and biblically non-existent.

“The majority of occurrences in the New Testament of the Greek verb *sōzō* (‘to save’) and its derivatives, especially the noun *sōtēria* (‘salvation’) have to do with the ultimate salvation of believers in Christ Jesus. The same phrase used in the stories of healing is also used of forgiveness of sin (Luke 7.48-50 cf. 18.52), and in the account of the paralytic (Matt. 9.2-8 par.) forgiveness of sin is a spiritual kind of healing concomitant with the physical restoration of health. For the one forgiven this spiritual healing is thus ‘salvation,’ in the sense of admission into the kingdom of God understood as both a present and a future reality. The salvation of individuals is the principal focus of the earlier New Testament writings. In Paul this salvation is both present and future; the two are closely linked in part at least because of Paul’s expectation of a prompt Second Coming (Rom. 5.8-11 8.18 1; 25; 18.11). So Paul can speak of those ‘who are being saved’ (1 Cor. 1.18; 15.2; 2 Cor. 2.15), as well as those who will be ‘saved in the day of the Lord’ (1 Cor. 5.5), both Jews (Rom. 11.26) and gentiles (1 Thess. 2.16). This same kind of realized eschatology’ is also found in the synoptic Gospels and in Acts, though in both it is a future salvation that dominates (Mark 8.35; 13.13 par.; Acts 15.11; contrast Luke 19.9: ‘Today salvation has come to this house’ and cf. Acts 47).”⁵⁸

Mark

When Jesus came on the scene preaching and inaugurating the kingdom of God, a conflict was presented between the forces of good and evil, of God’s kingdom and the anti-kingdom. Jesus’ message, authority, and his substantial role in salvation-history are derived from God. Mark’s emphasis on various elements of the story offered a nuanced telling of the stunning proclamation of Jesus’ authority and lordship for his audience.⁵⁹

⁵² *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig. G. Bartholomew (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 2004), xxiii.

⁵³ Matthew is the only Gospel to report the open graves of “saints who had fallen asleep” (27:52-3).

⁵⁴ Matt 24:3, 27, 37, 39.

⁵⁵ Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, I. Howard Marshall, “Salvation,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 722.

⁵⁶ Joel B. Green, “Salvation,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospel's*, 2d ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 828.

⁵⁷ Wright, *Justification*, 146-7.

⁵⁸ Meier and Metzger, *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 669.

⁵⁹ For example see Thomas Schmidt, “Jesus Triumphant March to Crucifixion: The Sacred Way as Roman Procession” *Biblical Review* (Feb. 1997), 30.

“The adherence to Jesus remains a precondition for eschatological salvation during the post resurrection period. . . . In the face of persecution and affliction during Jesus' absence the precondition for participation in the eschatological salvation is faithfulness to Jesus and the Gospel: whoever denies inherence to Jesus or the gospel (Mk 8:38 parentheses) forfeits salvation (Mk 8:34, 38; cf. Mk 4:16-19). . . . For Mark, salvation first of all means participation in God's eschatological reign (Mk 1:14-15; 9:47; 10:24-25), which will be brought about finally when the Son of Man returns (Mk 8:38-9:1; 13:24-27). The coming of the Son of Man is depicted as God's final judgment and is understood as the destruction of God's enemies. **Salvation therefore entails being saved from God's final judgment administered by the Son of Man** (Mk 8:34-9:1; 13:24-27; 14:62).”⁶⁰

Luke

It is Luke's Gospel that has Simeon declaring that the salvation Jesus brings into history will be a “light of revelation for the gentiles” (2:32). This theme is realized in the mission portrayed throughout Acts.

“Luke's massive two-volume work can be read as claiming, among many other things, that this status ought now to belong to the Christians. They are the ones who have inherited the Jewish promises of salvation; they are the ones to whom accrues the status proper to a religion of great antiquity.”⁶¹

“Luke clearly grasped the equally important Jewish belief that when Israel was redeemed the whole world would be blessed. Israel's salvation was not to be a private affair only: it was to be for the benefit of all. The good news of the established kingdom would have to impinge on the Gentile world. Since, therefore, he believed that this good news had taken the form of the life, and particularly the death and resurrection, of one human being, and since this was a Jewish message for the Gentile world, Luke blended together two apparently incompatible genres with consummate skill. He told the story of Jesus as a Jewish story, indeed as the Jewish story, much as Josephus told the story of the fall of Jerusalem as the climax of Israel's long and tragic history. But he told it in such a way as to say to his non-Jewish Greco-Roman audience: here, in the life of this one man, is the Jewish message of salvation that you pagans need.”⁶²

“‘Salvation’ is a particularly Lukan theme whose thesis is that ‘the idea of salvation supplies the key to the theology of Luke’ but familiar in (in verb or noun) in all strands of early Christianity.”⁶³

At the circumcision of John the Baptist, Zacharias prophesied concerning not only John, but regarding Luke's greater message of God's eschatological salvation-history:⁶⁴

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant-- As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old-- Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US; To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days” Luke 1:68-75.⁶⁵

John

This Gospel is interested not only in OT fulfillment but showing Jesus as the climax which scriptural history has pointed. Within salvation-history, John highlights the respective roles of Abraham, Moses and Isaiah as particularly important. In John, Jesus indicates that these individuals were pointing towards him as the fulfillment in God's final redemption of Israel (salvation is of the Jews), and the gentiles by way of inclusion.

In the gospel of John not only is Jesus identified as ‘savior,’ an interpretation of his name . . . but the object of salvation is frequently identified as ‘the world’ (Grk. *kosmos*) the created order now at enmity with God and therefore in need of salvation through Jesus (John 8.16-17; 12.47; cf. Rev. 12.10-12). A large number of personal names are derived from the Hebrew root *yš*, including those of Moses' successor Joshua, the prophets Hosea, Isaiah, and probably Elisha, the Moabite king Mesha, and Jesus (a Grk. form of Hebr. *yēšūa*; see Matt. 1.21 John 4.42; Acts 5.3 1; Phil. 3.20; Eph. 5.28; Titus 1.4; 2 Pet. 1.1); in all of these names God rather than

⁶⁰ Joel B. Green, “Salvation,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospel's*, Second Ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2013) 827.

⁶¹ Wright, *People of God*, 376-7.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 381. (cf. Acts 17).

⁶³ J. D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem, Christianity in the Making*, v. 2 (Erdmans, 2008), 672.

⁶⁴ In Acts 28, verse 28 appears to equate the gentiles listening to the “salvation of God” with Paul's preaching the Kingdom of God in verse 31.

⁶⁵ Notice that the wording of this prophecy is in the past tense, “visited,” “accomplished,” “raised,” but yet Jesus hadn't even been born at this time. Speaking in the past tense of something that is *assured* is an idiomatic expression common throughout biblical and Hebraic literature.

the person with the name is explicitly or implicitly the agent of salvation. The exclamation transliterated 'Hosanna' is also from this root."⁶⁶

Dualism

It is also worth noting that the Platonic view of dualism,⁶⁷ where one's "soul is saved," does not have its root in OT or NT theology. A passage used to support this theory is Luke 21:19, "By your endurance you will gain your souls" (NRS). Within this paradigm, the soul is separate from mortal existence; therefore it's the soul that is saved. The body is left behind upon death and replaced with a new "resurrection" incorporeal body. In this view, a redefinition of "you," is essential. Here the individual is the combination of the soul (immaterial) and the mortal tent, i.e. the human shell (material), in which they dwell. One of the problems with this is that only part of *you* is delivered upon death, not all of you. Other translations correct this issue by rendering the verse similar to the NASB, "you will gain your lives." In Hebraic understanding, the Greek concept of "soul" is impossible. The Greek word in question, *psyche* has historically been translated *soul*, no doubt from its use in Greek philosophy. In context, "salvation of life" is what is being presented. God is the God of the living (cf. Matt 22:32; Mk 12:27; Lk 20:38) and it is *lives* not souls that are in need of deliverance.⁶⁸ The Platonic and Augustinian idea of *soul* is in need of correction.

"For the first Christians, the ultimate salvation was all about God's new world, and the point of what Jesus and the apostles were doing when they were healing people or being rescued from shipwreck or whatever was that this was a proper anticipation of that ultimate salvation, that healing transformation of space, time, and matter. The future rescue that God had planned and promised was starting to come true in the present. We are saved not as souls but as wholes."⁶⁹

Salvation From Sin

While salvation from sin is a theme, the priority and later focus of the Church on this aspect – as though it encompassed the greater meaning of Jesus mission – misses the point. Jews in the first-century were not concerned about forgiveness and God's dealing with their sin because God had already made provision for this.

"There is no sign that first-century Jews were walking around gloomily wondering how their sins were ever going to be forgiven. They had the Temple and the sacrificial system, which took care of all that. If Jesus had only said what a lot of Western Christians seem to think he said, he would have been just a big yawn-maker. What he in fact said was so revolutionary that it woke everybody up."⁷⁰

Disease in the Gospels is often equated with sin. By forgiving sin and/or delivering one from the stated affliction, salvation had come. This was salvation from the certain death which would have ensued had there not been direct intervention.

"In the healings of both the woman with the hemorrhage (Mark 5.84 par.) and the blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10.52 par.), Jesus proclaims that their faith has 'saved' them; most recent translations correctly render the Greek verb *sōzō* 'has made you well'; cf. Mark 3.4; 5.23, 28; 6.56; Luke 17.19; Matt. 27.42 par.) Likewise, *sōzō* is used by the disciples when they thought they were drowning (Matt. 8.25; cf. 14.30) and (in a compound form) of Paul's escape from shipwreck (Acts 27.44; 28.1)."⁷¹

The works Jesus did correspond to the greater theme of his eschatological motif which pointed to the signs given by the prophets as to what *Yahweh* would do when he ushered in this "age to come."

"Mostly, Jesus himself got a hearing from his contemporaries because of what he was doing. They saw him saving people from sickness and death, and they heard him talking about a salvation, the message for which they had longed, that would go beyond the immediate into the ultimate future. But the two were not unrelated, the present one a mere visual aid of the future one or a trick to gain people's attention. The whole point of what Jesus was up to was that he was doing, close up, in the present, what he was promising long-term, in the future. And what he was promising for that future, and doing in that present, was not saving souls for a disembodied eternity but rescuing people from the corruption and decay of the way the world presently is so they could

⁶⁶ Meier and Metzger, *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 669-70.

⁶⁷ This is the popular view that human beings are compartmentalized into body and soul (sometimes with a side of spirit).

⁶⁸ For a short treatment of this see in OT John Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Baker Academic, 2006), 210-14.

⁶⁹ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 211.

⁷⁰ N.T. Wright, *Who was Jesus* (William B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 98.

⁷¹ Meier and Metzger, *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 670.

enjoy, already in the present, that renewal of creation which is God's ultimate purpose—and so they could thus become colleagues and partners in that larger project.”⁷²

The metaphorical use of salvation is often applied to the present:

“The death and resurrection of Jesus are the inauguration of the promised new age; and this ‘age to come’ is the long-awaited time of deliverance. The Jewish metaphorical meaning (resurrection as the rescue and restoration of Israel after exile and oppression) is retained but transformed: the divine rescue operation through Jesus is for all people, and delivers Jew and Gentile alike from the present evil age.”⁷³

Jesus actively intervened in the *chaos* (“destroying the works of the Devil”)⁷⁴ of peoples’ lives, making the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear, and the mute speak. In this manner, he brought the salvation of the future, when all will be right, into a small geographical region and to a relatively small number of people (cf. Luke 4:23-27) as a taste of what *Yahweh* would do on a grand scale. The prophets had foretold these things were to happen.

Salvation According to Paul

- Past
- Present
- Future
- Resurrection as Salvation

Paul had a resurrection based soteriology. Paul and Luke are both most interested in salvation along with its progression. Paul used the verb *sōzō* (to save) twenty-nine times, topping anyone else in the NT. He makes up for half of the twenty-four times the noun *sōtēr* (savior) is used in the NT. Eighteen times he employed *sōtēria* (salvation) and singularly used *sōtērion* (salvation) and *sōtērios* (bringing salvation). He also used the verb *rhuomai* (deliver, rescue) eleven times.

When speaking of *saving* some of his fellow Israelites (e.g. Rom. 11:14), Paul did not intend that his own actions would effect salvation, but rather he provided them with the message given him by God, thereby causing them to turn and enter into the deliverance to be provided by God in Christ.

“Knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed” (Rom 13:11).⁷⁵

Paul used the word *egeiro* (to wake), which can have no connection to asking Jesus to be a personal savior. Otherwise Paul could have not said salvation was *still before* us, and nearer than before, when we first believed. If the “day of salvation” (1 Cor 6:2; Isa 49:8) is the day I “made a decision” for Jesus, then that day is behind me and getting further every day. Paul undoubtedly had something else in mind.

Ergo, it should not come as a surprise that Paul was thinking much larger. The word *egeiro* is the same word used for the raising of the dead, no doubt making connection with the LXX.⁷⁶ “The day of salvation” points toward a time of full restoration of cosmic proportions, the arrival of the long-awaited rule of God and the triumph over his enemies. This includes the enemy of death.⁷⁷ The entire order of the cosmos is about to be overturned and *Yahweh* – through his anointed, established and declared regent-king Jesus – will at last deliver his people from not only their present enemies, but the enemy that has plagued humanity all throughout history.

This is not a matter of a “personal rescue” operation (although that is not excluded). It's much larger. Jesus' death, burial and resurrection became the first-fruits of a larger harvest in the garden of

⁷² Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 204.

⁷³ Wright, *Resurrection*, 220

⁷⁴ 1 John 3:8.

⁷⁵ “In popular evangelicalism salvation is constantly spoken of as something only in the past: ‘when I got saved . . .’ In the NT the balance of the salvation statements is in favor of a yet future final salvation. The NT says too that we ‘are being saved.’ (1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15).” A. Buzzard, “Romans 13:11,” *The One God the Father, One Man Messiah Translation* (Restoration Fellowship, 2015), 403.

⁷⁶ Passages such as Daniel 12 could be recalled, “those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. . . . you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age” v. 2, 13.

⁷⁷ This is vital within Paul's soteriology, e.g. 1 Cor 15, possibly even relating to the exodus and the personal force, the destroyer.

God.⁷⁸ The seeds have been planted and life will come shooting out of the ground at God's timing. The re-establishment of God's divine order will be underway, and creation will revert to its original intent for which it was designed.

“This inaugurated eschatology is the primary driver for Paul's redefinition of what it means to be God's people (which is what he is still talking about, rather than any abstract scheme of ‘how people get saved’ which ignores the Israel dimension). If the end has come forward into the present—if the Messiah has arrived in the middle of history—if resurrection itself has happened in one case while death still appears to reign all around—then the verdict of the last day is already known, and the careful eschatological schemes by which various quite different groups of Jews had organized themselves, their lives and their soteriologies must be seen in a different light.”⁷⁹

For Paul, deliverance from sin is important because it affects one's relationship to the “wrath or judgment of God,” although it is more common for him to simply speak of “salvation” rather than that from which one is saved. However, being “saved from sin” for Paul is tantamount to being released from the implications of God's active justice which inevitably culminates in death. The Messiah Jesus, the man whom God has raised in declaration of divine appointment as judge, will enact God's justice and reform. While being “saved from sin” manifests itself in corporeal and temporal benefits, Paul's larger emphasis is eschatological when surveying the usage alongside his proclamation of the Gospel of the kingdom and *parousia* language.

Past

Paul occasionally uses the past tense when referring to salvation:

“For in hope we have been saved” (Rom 8:24, cf. Tit 2:11),⁸⁰

“For by grace you have been saved through faith” (Eph 2:8);⁸¹

“He [God our Savior] saved us, not on the basis of deeds” (Tit 3:5),⁸²

“He [the Father] rescued us from the domain of darkness” (Col 1:13).⁸³

Regardless of one's eschatological orientation, it seems most are agreed that this present age – with its domain of darkness – is not as it *should be* and as it *will be* in the age to come. What is ahead, how to fix the problems now, and what God intends are usually where debate centers. Paul, though, envisions the people of God connected with the Messiah and saved in the manner which he described in detail to the Corinthians, “first-fruits.”

“The Messiah has been raised from the dead, as the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” 1 Cor 15:20 (Wright, KNT).

⁷⁸ In the OT God is sometimes a farmer/gardener and Israel is a tree, vine whose purpose is to yield fruit. In Jesus parables, the same metaphor is used. Even after Jesus' resurrection, he is *mistaken* for a “gardener.” There can be little question that an allusion to God's garden (Eden/restoration) and Jesus' role as caretaker is being communicated.

⁷⁹ Wright, *Justification*, 148.

⁸⁰ Although the verb used is in the aorist tense – denoting something that has been done – for Paul the nature of hope is anticipation, “We . . . groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of the body” (Rom 8:23). The adoption for which believers long for is their final salvation. The “inward groaning” experienced by believers and creation (8:22) is as Dunn describes, “the inward sense of frustration of individual believers (as a whole) at the eschatological tension of living in the overlap of the ages seems the most obvious reference, not least in view of the parallel with v 26 and 2 Cor 5:2, 4.” J. D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 38A:474. It is the redemption of the body, i.e. resurrection which is to be fully realized. This is evident in what the apostle explains, “hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees . . . if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it” (Rom 8:24-25, cf. 2 Cor 5:7). “Hope in the NT is always future oriented, and unseen in the sense that the object of hope is yet to be revealed. Yet hope is not wishful thinking, but what the writer to the Hebrews describes as both ‘sure’ and ‘certain’ (Heb 11:1).” Colin G. Kruse, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012), 350. See also J. D. G. Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity, Christianity in the Making*, v. 3 (Eerdmans, 2015), 714.

⁸¹ In the context of this passage there are clues that through Paul's strong use of metaphor and the use of the past tense, he alludes to a future reality. Paul's wording “made alive” (v. 5) and “raised us up and seated us with Him in the heavenly places” (v. 6) seems to specify “so that in the ages to come” (v. 7) a reference to glorification that awaits the saints. It is also possible that Paul sees believers being represented in heaven, Christ having been seated at the right hand of God (cf. Rom 8:16-24). See F.F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 287.

⁸² Here, the mention of “saved” although past, is tied to the hope of future life in the age to come (v. 7).

⁸³ The context in Paul's greeting is the inheritance that is being shared with the saints. Through the spirit, the guarantee, the first-fruits of what is to come, was given. This is sometimes called “*now and not yet*.”

First-fruits was an offering of the first-ripened grain, harvested and presented to God in celebration and thanks for the whole harvest which would follow.

“‘We were saved,’ says Paul in Romans 8:24, ‘in hope.’ The verb ‘we were saved’ indicates a past action, something that has already taken place, referring obviously to the complex of faith and baptism of which Paul has been speaking in the letter so far. But this remains ‘in hope’ because we still look forward to the ultimate future salvation of which he speaks ‘in (for instance) Romans 5:9, 10. This explains at a stroke the otherwise puzzling fact that the New Testament often refers to salvation and being saved in terms of bodily events within the present world.’”⁸⁴

Present

“The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” 1 Co 1:18.

The NT sometimes indicates that salvation, justification, redemption, adoption, glorification, and resurrection are both past and present realities.⁸⁵ However, the larger scope of salvation is indeed God's rescue operation for all humanity from sin and death through messiah, which culminates in resurrection where death is destroyed for those who sleep in the dust. It cannot be ignored that this is also an eschatological final deliverance of Israel and the saints from their *physical* enemies.

“Jesus believed that there was one God who had made the world, and who had called Israel to be his people; that this one God had promised to be with his people, and guide them to their destiny, their new exodus; that his presence, guidance and ultimately salvation were symbolized, brought into reality, in and through Temple, Torah, Wisdom, Word and Spirit. He was a first-century Jewish monotheist.”⁸⁶

Along with the role of God as savior and deliverer, Scripture also places an emphasis on the role his people play in the present, as it is the present that determines the future. Endurance, persistence, determination, tenacity, patience, and ultimately obedience are all intimately connected as actions of the faithful. Faith is an *action-oriented* dynamic based on God's covenant-keeping character, not *something* I retain as a medallion.

Participation is the reality. Faith without action has no validity. Upon consideration of the *Shema* one will discover that hearing, as a Jew would describe it, is done in ones “feet,” meaning it is action-based, hearing that immediately translates into action, a.k.a. obedience.

“Theologically, salvation depends to some extent on the individual's faith in Yahweh. Ps. 37:40 affirms that Yahweh saves ‘because they take refuge in him’ (cf. 13:5[6]; 25:5; 42:5[6]; 65:5[6]; 78:22; 86:2; 119:94; Lam 3:26; et al.). Ps 119:146 appeals your personal deliverance to achieve a purpose – ‘I will keep your statutes.’”⁸⁷

When Paul wrote in Romans 10:17 that “faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ,” he no doubt had the *Shema* in mind. While the “word of Messiah” is without question the Good News about the Kingdom of God which he proclaimed, in Paul's mind faith, i.e. action/obedience, results in salvation. We have been conditioned far too long to think that salvation is an object of our possession that can exist independent of our behavior. *Yahweh*, the covenant-keeping God, is secure; it is us, when un-*faith-ful*, who have no salvation. If we choose to act as though we possess a free pass and nothing more is required, we have chosen to abandon the relationship and the means by which we are made righteous.

It is in this present time – while we wait, train for service and live as citizens of a kingdom to come – that we can say with Paul, that we too are *working out our salvation with fear and trembling*.⁸⁸ Deliverance is the result of our dynamic interaction with him through his promise. Salvation exists by God's grace towards his people and the obedience on their behalf with his assistance. Our work is God's work too. In the NT, the work in and through a believer is an expression of God's renewing, restoring and salvific action. Salvation is not about going to heaven, but rather being raised from death for life on God's renewed earth. We anticipate in the present what will become full reality in the future.

⁸⁴ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 210-11.

⁸⁵ Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14.

⁸⁶ Wright, *Victory*, 652.

⁸⁷ William A. VanGemeren, “*יְשׁוּעָה*,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 1997), 2:560.

⁸⁸ Phil 3:20; 2:12,

Assurance

“Paul would certainly see 'salvation' as secured through 'belief in the Lord Jesus', however much such belief would have to be spelled out in any particular case.”⁸⁹

The book of Jude with its unique content and non-canonical citations contains a noteworthy warning to its readership:

“Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe” Jud 1:5.

The idea that belief and obedience are mutually exclusive or autonomous is not found in the OT or apostolic tradition. God does indeed secure his people, but not without their consent or cooperation. Security and safety are found in continual obedience to God; it's his word not ours. Once the later idea that grace and obedience are separate from each other is removed – one being accomplished by God's fiat alone and the other optional by us – Jude's warning is perfectly appropriate. “*Those who did not believe*” are not those who *wandered* into heresy,⁹⁰ but rather those who after participating in God's renewing and restoration power refused to participate and act in the obedience required to be part of that kingdom. This is not a matter of maintaining proper theology, but rather a failure to put into action God's commands. There are numerous examples of faith as obedience, where those who were once obedient but did not continue on that path were subsequently judged by God.

The psalmist wrote:

“The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their strength in time of trouble. The LORD helps them and delivers them; He delivers them from the wicked and saves them, Because they take refuge in Him” Ps 37:39-40.

There is no question that *Yahweh* is the source, character, nature, substance, and reality of salvation. It depends on his faithfulness, consistency and reliability, not our wavering attempts. Does this then describe our eternal security; are we eternally secure? I believe that is the wrong question to ask. A better question is, “Who are the righteous,” which the passage describes? This passage (and others like it) is about the righteous, a topic about which the OT (especially the Psalms) has a lot to say. Jesus came teaching Israel what the actions of a righteous (kingdom citizen) look like. God himself is our guarantee, as Paul said, “by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” Eph 4:30.⁹¹

Within the idiomatic way biblical language works, salvation can be spoken of as an accomplished action, although in modern ways of reckoning it causes substantial confusion regarding that from which we are being “saved.”

The proof of spiritual transformation in the Gospels is the confirmation of the people and the spirit of God. There is a sense in which the principle, first taught in the OT, and taught also by Jesus with the witness of at least two, is appropriate. It's not a matter of self-confirming statements, but rather community affirmation. Obedience is obvious.

“The sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death” 2 Cor 7:10.

The declaration by many dedicated men of God should ring in our ear; *hineni*, “here I am,” your servant waits for your instruction. Obedience is the best gauge in the present regarding one's salvation being a reality in the future.

“The righteous dead still await the promised resurrection, 'God' has singled out Jesus, bestowing on him, uniquely, resurrected existence and making him thereby the exemplar of what believers can hope for and the assurance that their hope in 'God's' readiness and power to raise the dead is not in vain (esp. 1 Cor 15:20-58; Heb 2:5-18; 1 John 3:1-3). Resurrection, thus, is presented as the essential means by which 'God' will demonstrate faithfulness to believers, and their hoped-for salvation/vindication is directly patterned after what 'God' did in/for Jesus. . . . So, 'God' in the NT is emphatically known as the deity who raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him to glory, which justifies and even demands now that Jesus be proclaimed as 'Lord' (e.g., Phil 2:9-11). But God's resurrection of Jesus also serves to signal incomparably this God's great power and

⁸⁹ J. D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem, Christianity in the Making*, vol. 2 (Erdmans, 2008), 674.

⁹⁰ 1 Tim 4:16.

⁹¹ Eze 9:4; Eph 1:13-4; 4:30; 2 Cor 1:21-2; 5:5; 2 Tim 2:19; Rev 7:3; 9:4.

purpose, which are to eventuate in a personal/bodily glorification of believers that is patterned after that given to Jesus.”⁹²

Future

“‘Salvation’ for Paul, it should not be forgotten, is the future goal towards which all looked and directed his converts.”⁹³

Prolepsis, according to the Oxford dictionary, is “the representation of a thing as existing before it actually does or did so.”⁹⁴ This delineation of salvation finds a great deal of support in the NT. While past and present salvation⁹⁵ are represented to varying degrees through the process of sanctification, salvation in its other forms finds its fullest expression in the hope offered in the future redemption.⁹⁶

“We note, first, what ‘salvation’ actually means . . . we are not saved from the world of creation, but saved for the world of creation (Romans 8:18-26). Humans were made to take care of God’s wonderful world, and it is not too strong to say that the reason God saves humans is not simply that he loves them for themselves but that he loves them for what they truly are—his pro-creators, his stewards, his vice regents over creation. . . . ‘Salvation’ is from death itself, and all that leads to it and shares its destructive character (tribulation, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, weaponry) and all the powers that use these things to oppress humans and deface God’s world. ‘Salvation’ does not mean ‘dying and going to heaven,’ as so many Western Christians have supposed for so long. If your body dies and your soul goes into a disembodied immortality, you have not been rescued from death; you have, quite simply, died. That is why resurrection means what it means: it is not a bizarre miracle, but the very center of God’s plan and purpose. God will renew the whole creation, and raise his people to new bodily life to share his rule over his world. That is ‘what the whole world’s waiting for’ (Romans 8:19).”⁹⁷

It is obvious that we are not saved now in the sense that we have already been rescued from the condemnation of sin, which is death, or the consequences that sin often brings in this life. But for those who have placed their trust in the messenger, message and who act in obedience, God has marked for salvation.

“How magnificent are the prophetic revelations contained in the *Thorah*, embracing the whole future history of the kingdom of God till its glorious consummation at the end of the world! Apart from such promises as Gen. 12:1–3, Ex. 19:5, 6, and others, which point to the goal and termination of the ways of God from the very commencement of His work of salvation; not only does Moses in the ode sung at the Red Sea behold his people brought safely to Canaan, and Jehovah enthroned as the everlasting King in the sanctuary established by Himself (Ex. 15:13, 17, 18), but from Sinai and in the plains of Moab he surveys the future history of his people.”⁹⁸

This means that we will be raised to incorruptibility because Jesus was. This is rescue from sin, sickness, death, destruction, and deterioration. We wait for our inheritance in hope, while acting it out in faith.

“The collocation ‘look for deliverance’ . . . ‘we look for . . . salvation’ (cf. Prov 20:22). Both terms are poetic, occurring most frequently in the Psalms and Isaiah. לָקַח ‘look for, hope, wait for’ expresses a positive

⁹² L. W. Hurtado, *God in New Testament Theology* (Abingdon Press, 2010), 42.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 706-7.

⁹⁴ Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁹⁵ While Greek and English express a linear view of time through verbal tenses, the Hebrew does not. Hebrew has two verbal aspects or actions known as perfect and imperfect, meaning complete or incomplete. Therefore when it comes to salvation and the root it has in the OT, it is important to understand the difficulty to accurately convey the initial context within a Greek paradigm when speaking of something that is ongoing, not yet complete or in anticipation of being fully expressed. Passages like Gen 15:18 where the perfect – “To your descendants I have given” – is spoken of in a future sense to not yet existing descendants exemplifies this way of Hebraic use of language; *here, but not yet*, or as Gesenius calls it, *perfectum propheticum* (prophetic perfect): F. W. Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew grammar*, E. Kautzsch & S. A. E. Cowley ed., 2d English ed. (Oxford, 1910), 312-3. The examples throughout the Scriptures employing this Hebraic idiomatic device are plentiful. See Keil and Delitzsch, 10:136; C. L. Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, Revised ed. (Abingdon Press, 1995), 149; E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, (London; New York: Eyre & Spottiswoode; E. & J. B. Young & Co., 1898), 518, 819-20.

⁹⁶ Rom 5:1-2; 8:23; Gal 5:5; Eph 1:14; 4:30; Col 1:27. “The people who belong to the one God will be vindicated. That vindication will consist, for those already dead, in their resurrection; for those still alive, in their transformation so that their body is no longer of the corruptible sort. This will mean ‘salvation’ (as opposed to ‘wrath’ as in 1 Thessalonians 5:9), in the sense of rescue from death itself.” Wright, *Resurrection*, 215-6.

⁹⁷ Wright, *Justification*, 234.

⁹⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, 1:10.

expectation as in English ‘look forward to.’ ‘God, light, good grapes, justice’ are things that the Bible writers ‘look forward to.’ ישועה is usually translated ‘salvation,’ because it most frequently comes from God. But since ‘salvation’ tends to be understood in English in a narrow spiritual sense, I have rendered it ‘deliverance,’ because it covers earthly God-given benefits as well (e.g., victory [Exod 15:2], childbirth [1 Sam 2:1]).”⁹⁹

“Eschatological salvation involves the restoration of a new David over a united Israel (Jer 23:6; 33:16; Ezekiel 34:22; Zechariah 9:9; cf. 10:6; 12:7). For Ezekiel, the renewed kingdom produces purification of Israel’s earlier defilement by idolatry (37:23).”¹⁰⁰

Resurrection as Salvation

“Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst . . . do not touch any man on whom is the mark” (Eze 9:4, 6).

Failure to interpret believers’ hope in terms of the resurrection, but rather in favor of a home somewhere else, i.e. heaven, has caused a breach between the message of the Bible and what most Christians believe about salvation. Christianity has forgotten its roots.

“There are many today who regard themselves as Christians who do not believe in the resurrection and glorification of the body. They believe that when the Christian dies he goes to be with Christ: and they seem to think of that as some vague, nebulous, indefinite spiritual state and condition [heaven]. But that is not the teaching of the Scripture. The Scripture teaches the resurrection of the body as an essential part of our salvation. . . . We shall dwell in these glorified bodies on the glorified earth. This is one of the great Christian doctrines that has been almost entirely forgotten and ignored. Unfortunately, the Christian church – I speak generally – does not believe this, and therefore does not teach it. It has lost its hope.”¹⁰¹

Those who are in Messiah share in the story which is ultimately about bringing Israel’s salvation-history to its fulfillment. Paul is quite clear about the reality of the resurrection for all believers, including the patriarchs and those saints of old. Paul didn’t invent this idea, for by his time it was already a prominent belief (cf. John 5:29; Acts 23:6, 8; 24:14-15).

“Salvation, then, was a matter of a new world, the renewal of creation. Within this, Israel’s god would call some from within the nation to be a new Israel, the spearhead of the divine purpose. Within this again, this renewed people were to be the holy, pure, renewed human beings, living in a covenant fidelity which would answer to the covenant faithfulness of the creator god, and which would end in the renewal, i.e. resurrection, of human bodies themselves. When this god acted, those who belonged, by his grace alone, to this group, would be rescued, and thereby vindicated as the true people of god that they had claimed to be all along. Those who had died in advance of that day would be raised in order to share it. It is thus, within the context of the entire future hope of Israel, and in particular within the context of the promise of resurrection, that we can understand the essentially simple lines of second-temple Jewish soteriology. The doctrines of justification and salvation belong within the story we have seen all along to characterize the fundamental Jewish worldview”¹⁰²

Paul is telling the same story that has already been told, the story that intimately shapes the Gospel of the Kingdom. Paul taught this wherever he went, even when he knew there would be opposition (Acts 17:31-32; 23:6).

“What does Paul mean by ‘resurrection’? In this passage he clearly indicates that those who have already died will, at some future date, be raised from the dead ‘in the same way’ (houtos, 4:14). Jesus’ resurrection will be the model for that of his people. Those currently dead will rise up (anastesontai, 4:16), and so possess ‘salvation’ rather than being the objects of ‘wrath’ (5:9). The words Paul uses, the nature of his argument, and the underlying story-line, all make it crystal clear that he belongs, at this point, right in the middle of second-Temple Jewish beliefs about resurrection. Take Jesus out of this picture, and what is being asserted—the future resurrection to salvation from wrath, for those presently dead who belong to the people of the one god—is familiar from our study of Judaism: it is the position of the Pharisees. Whatever other beliefs Paul revised following his conversion, resurrection remained constant. This means that we are bound to see resurrection as bodily, not only because of the terminology (there is no evidence that the anastasis root meant anything other than bodily resurrection, either in the paganism that denied it or “the Pharisaic Judaism that affirmed it), not

⁹⁹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16-50* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 2:481

¹⁰⁰ William A. VanGemeren, “שׁוּעָה,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 1997), 2:558.

¹⁰¹ Martyn Llyod-Jones, *Roman: Exposition of Chapters 8:17-39, The Final Perseverance of the Saints*, 14 vols. (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 8:71-72.

¹⁰² Wright, *People of God*, 337.

only because of the obviously Jewish context, but also because of the narrative logic. Resurrection is something new, something the dead do not presently enjoy.”¹⁰³

It must be clear about what Paul did *not* mean when speaking of resurrection. Resurrection was not a plan for the afterlife whereby people would be “saved” for *something else* nor was it a belief system for teaching life after death. It was a promise to those who were worshipers of the One True God of Israel that death was not the end. The dead would be eventually given remade bodies and would return to life not completely unlike what they had before.

“It should be noted most emphatically that, although ‘resurrection’ is naturally something that individuals can hope for, for themselves or for those they love, the belief . . . is always focused on a general resurrection at the end of the present age and the start of the age to come. This will be a raising to life in which all Israel (with suitable exceptions, depending on one’s point of view) will share. Seen from one angle, it will constitute Israel’s salvation: after the long years of oppression and desolation, she will be rescued at last. From another angle, it will constitute Israel’s vindication (or ‘justification’): having claimed throughout her history to be the people of the creator god, the resurrection will at last make the claim good. Creational and covenantal monotheism, and the eschatology to which they give birth, thus form a context within which what is sometimes called ‘Jewish soteriology’, the beliefs that Jews held about salvation, may be situated accurately and fruitfully.”¹⁰⁴

In the few centuries before Paul, this belief had begun to become widely believed within Judaism (with the exception of the Sadducees).¹⁰⁵ When Paul taught and wrote about Jesus having been vindicated in resurrection by God, therefore providing proof of authentication, the general thought would not have been that of disembodied existence. Jesus being *raised to heaven* is about authority, status and operation rather than *geography* as Christians have been acclimated to thinking.

God, through Jesus, has begun to break the power death has wielded. This is Paul’s point in 1 Corinthians 15; final victory for all those who are aligned with Messiah is assured. In biblical thought, death has always been the result of sin. Jesus, through faithfulness, is the bearer of a new covenant God has made with his people. Sin demands the justice of God. Through Jesus’ death, the process of death’s defeat has begun. With the defeat of death, will come the final defeat of sin.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:14, Paul defines the goal of believers to be sharing in the glory of the lord Jesus, the Messiah. In verse 13, “salvation” is seemingly set as a parallel to this “glory.” This is similar to what is described in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, where the God-fearer is set to obtain salvation, as opposed to wrath. God, through Jesus is in the process of defeating death, reversing its hold. All the people of God will share in the glory Jesus already enjoys, free from death and corruption.

The future resurrection will be the commencement of the “age to come,” where the kingdom that was planted long ago will finally blossom into a full grown tree producing the fruit it was created to bear. It is the salvation of the people of God.

“Jewish eschatology in the second-Temple period focused on the hope that that which had happened in the Babylonian exile, the triumph of paganism over Israel because of her sins, was still the dominant state of affairs, but would at last be undone. Ironically, at this point one normal would-be Christian viewpoint—that the Bible contains proof-texts for a timeless and non-historical system of salvation—has combined with the non-eschatological viewpoint of the post-135 rabbis to mislead those who come from either tradition of reading. If we are to be historians of Jesus’ own period we must think our way back from those subsequent rereadings to the very historically concrete worldview of the second-Temple period itself.”¹⁰⁶

The people of God will reap the promises made to them concerning their inheritance and they will be established in security and flourish as God had created humanity to do. The chaos that has governed for so long will be pushed back as God’s people, along with the Messiah, restore the *Edenic shalom*.

“The eschatological judgment of wrath comes about in accordance with covenant and promise, because it will lead to redemption and to salvation.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Wright, *Resurrection*, 215.

¹⁰⁴ Wright, *People of God*, 334.

¹⁰⁵ The Pharisees are often misunderstood by Christians. There were disputes with Jesus that were theological, which is typical among religious Jews even today. This was a different dispute that was between Jesus and the Sadducees, the ruling aristocracy. See Wright, *People of God*, 189.

¹⁰⁶ Wright, *Victory*, xviii.

¹⁰⁷ J. D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 38A:55.

Due to the disobedience of the nations, they will come under the judgment of God to be carried out through the Messiah along with the saints. It is the physical oppression of the *beastly* empires of this world, God's judgment and subsequent condemnation upon it, and death itself from which the people of God are saved.¹⁰⁸ This is all intimately connected with the *parousia*, the revealing of Jesus the Messiah who brings with him deliverance in varying forms to all who have eagerly waited.¹⁰⁹

“The proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries . . .” 1Pe 1:7-10.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

Misuse of the biblical text, and ultimately what salvation represents, has done tremendous damage. Jesus' words have been twisted to accommodate a foreign perception vis à vis the message he and his followers were proclaiming. The easy, non-existent gospel of “little sinner, little sinner, let Jesus come in” may be heartwarming or emote a certain romanticism – having created a caricature of a loving, caring Jesus who stands at the threshold of people's hearts begging them give him entrance into their lives as a personal Lord and savior – but nevertheless it is not accurate and has no presence in the biblical narrative. Jesus is not pressing, coercing, or pressuring anyone to be participants.¹¹¹

The Church needs to stop acting like a business and cease stooping to poor tactics in an attempt to solicit sales or win recruits. Twisting the text to make it dramatic, palatable, or emotional is not God's mission. Modern Christianity has become reprehensible to those who know better. The fullest sense of what the Gospel of the Kingdom of God represented was never a matter of Jesus being king of someone's heart. It rather pointed towards repentance, restoration, renewal and redemption.

Christians tend to read the Bible without surveying the larger story God's people are playing out.

“If we really want to recover the authority of Scripture in our lives, then we urgently need to recover the bible as a grand story that tells us of God's ways with the world from creation to re-creation, from the garden of Eden to the new Jerusalem. Only thus will we see our way clear to indwell God's story and relate it to all of life today.”¹¹²

The story of God's saving character is prevalent throughout the OT as surely as it infiltrates the NT. God asks his people to participate with him, believe in his anointed messenger, act in obedience, and to step out in faith. We are resurrection people. Our lives should be lived in such a way as to reflect this.

¹⁰⁸ The jailer at Philippi in Acts 16 is a good example. For a thorough treatment of this see Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 4 vols. (Baker Academic, 2014), 3:2507-2512.

¹⁰⁹ Rom 8:16-24; 1 Cor 1:7; 1 Thes 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; Jam 5:7-8; 1 Pe 1:5, 7-10, 13; 3:10-15; Heb 2:10-11; 5:9; 9:28; Rev 1:7; 12:10; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20.

¹¹⁰ Cf. 2 Tim 2:10-11; 3:15

¹¹¹ Revelation 3:20 is sometimes cited as though Jesus knocks on the doors of hearts. The context does not support this interpretation. The door at which Jesus knocked in Revelation 3:20 was not a vague spiritual metaphor, but rather a specific door. And while he wasn't physically knocking, he was however speaking to real people, a specific group: “To the angel [not pastor] of the church in Laodicea” (Rev 3:14). They are known in this passage as the lukewarm church. In Revelation 3:14-22, they are verbally chastised for their apathy and complacency: “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot” (v. 15). Hot water is good and useful, as is cold, living and refreshing water. But tepid, mineral filled water is useless. They did not necessarily reject Christ, but their passion and zeal had waned and disobedience had ensued. They maintained their profession of Christ, but in reality there was no place for him in their assembly. It is in this context that Christ stood outside the door of the Laodicean church, eager for them to make amends as a congregation and restore their relationship to God and fellowship with Christ through repentance.

¹¹² Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen, “Story and Biblical Theology,” *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig. G. Bartholomew (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 2004), 144.