

The Doctrine of Salvation

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Yeshua:

The word “salvation” in Greek, *Soteriology*, is derived from two Greek words, *Soteria*, meaning salvation, and *logos*, meaning “word, discourse, or doctrine.”ⁱ Having studied the infinite holy nature of God and the fallen, depraved nature of man, only God could bridge the gap between Himself and His creation. As Jesus said, “*With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible*” (*Mathew 19:26, NKJV*).ⁱⁱ

God foreknew that Adam and Eve would sin even before their creation, conceiving a plan for our redemption and salvation. He foresaw our fall and foreordained a rescue plan through the Messiah, “*The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (*Revelation 13:8*). God’s plan of salvation is so simple that even a child could understand it. Jesus prayed: “*I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight*” (*Luke 10:21*).ⁱⁱⁱ It seems that God is hidden from those who think they have understanding but are blind—the curse of the tree of knowledge. Paul said: “*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*” (*1 Corinthians 1:18*).

God’s plan of salvation centers around the function of a mediator, a high priest, who could officiate God’s propitiation for sin on behalf of the offending person.^{iv} To be a mediator for God, the mediator must be God. And to represent mankind to God, the mediator must also be a man. Hence, Jesus, Son of God, is called the Son of man—fully God and man.^v We read, “*Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people*” (*Hebrews 2:17*).

The Aaronic priesthood only served as a provisional intermediary, officiating the sacraments of the Temple through the shedding of animal blood. The Lord said, “*For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul*” (*Leviticus 17:11*). Being a priest was not a glorified job. The Levites were required to surround and guard the Tabernacle so that God’s wrath would not come upon the children of Israel.^{vi} They were responsible for packing, transporting, and reconstructing the Tabernacle in the wilderness for forty years, eventually delivering it to the land of Israel. They had to cut and split the wood to maintain the perpetual flame for the altar of

sacrifice and slaughtered thousands of animals to be offered to the Lord. They had to prepare the daily showbread, purify the olive oil, refill the golden lampstand, and the list goes on and on.

However, the *kohanim* carried a more significant burden, notably the High Priest. This one man wore eight special priestly vestments that included a breastplate (*choshen mishpat*) which means the breastplate of "resolution" or "judgment."^{vii} The plate was adorned with twelve stones, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. The breastplate was used to invoke Divine direction for the nation of Israel. Deeply, through wearing the breastplate, the High Priest could initiate Divine atonement for the nation of Israel, including injustice taking place in the court system. However, by wearing the breastplate, the High Priest did more than make atonement for Israel. He bore the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart continually before the Lord.^{viii}

The High Priest also had to carry two sardonyx stones on his shoulders, one on the right and one on the left. The stones were engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel, called "stones of remembrance" or "stones of memorial."^{ix} And for Aaron's involvement with forming the Golden Calf and leading Israel astray, the Lord said to him: "*You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity associated with your priesthood*" (Numbers 18:1). God was making a point about the weight and severity of sin.

While God's Mosaic covenant with Israel extended His grace and reprieve from wrath, it was limited and temporary. We read: "*Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?*" (Hebrews 7:11); "*For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second*" (Hebrews 8:7). God needed to provide a sacrifice of a suitable type to satiate His wrath against sinful man and propitiate for the damage caused to the creation by it. As God is Spirit and cannot die, and "*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh*" (Romans 8:3).

As God condemned our sins in the flesh, Jesus, God incarnate, had to come in the flesh and shed His blood to pay for them.^x There was no other way; hence, we read: "*For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul*" (Leviticus 17:11); "*It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin... He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors*" (Isaiah 53:10-12).

Jesus did not die to redeem our flesh; He died to save our souls. We read in Genesis: "*The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [nishmat chaim]; and man became a living being [in Hebrew a living soul—Nefesh Chaya]*" (Genesis 2:7). Hence, we understand this present body will eventually die and return to the earth.

But our soul, which came from God, has an eternal quality because God is eternal; He took part of Himself and placed it in each person through Adam. Therefore, our soul comes from God's innermost essence in the same way breath comes from a person's lungs. And because our soul was initially part of God, it has immeasurable value in Jewish thought.

Jesus warned His disciples, saying, *"Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matthew 10:28). God's ultimate punishment for our sin is against the body *and* soul. Yet, in Christ, our soul is being redeemed. We have been given a new heart and spirit and have become a new creation.^{xi} Paul said: *"Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body"* (1 Corinthians 6:18).

If our soul is being redeemed, then with our perishable bodies, the Lord will bury His righteous judgments against our flesh forever for the sins we have committed in the flesh. Hence, Paul said, *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20); *"Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"* (Galatians 5:24).

Jesus performed so many miracles that the world could not contain the books that would be written.^{xii} But of all His works, the importance of His death, burial, and resurrection cannot be overstated. Jesus's primary reason for coming was to bring salvation to the souls of men. We read, *"She will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins"* (Matthew 1:21). Of all the religions in the world, only Christianity offers the assurance of eternal life and deliverance from sin. This is accomplished through the substitutionary death of Christ, the Son of God.

The death of the Messiah is foreshadowed in the Old Testament. The coats of animal skin given to Adam and Eve, Abel's offering of the firstling of his flock, Abraham's offering of Sarah's firstborn, Isaac, the Passover lamb, the bronze serpent, the Tabernacle sacrifices, and most notably, the vicarious suffering servant in Isaiah 53.^{xiii} The first prophecy concerning the Messiah was spoken to Eve, often called the "first gospel" (Protevangelium). The Lord said: *"I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel"* (Genesis 3:15). In Psalm 22 and Zechariah 13, we see a prophetic picture of Christ's crucifixion, the wounded shepherd, and in Daniel, we are given the exact time the Messiah would be cut off from His people.^{xiv}

Jesus spoke to His disciples, saying, *"Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself"* (Luke 24:26-27). And when Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, they spoke of His death: *"Behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem"* (Luke 9:30-31). His death was the result of accidental causes. Nor was His death a case of human martyrdom or God merely using Christ as

an example to exhibit His displeasure with sin. No, Christ's death was God's plan for humanity's redemption from the beginning, as we read: *"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"* (Revelation 13:8).

The suffering of the Messiah is the greatest mystery and uttermost desire of the Old Testament prophets to have inquired and searched diligently about.^{xv} In the New Testament, the death of Christ is mentioned more than one hundred seventy-five times and one in forty-five verses. And the last three days of Jesus's earthly life comprise about twenty percent of the Gospels.^{xvi} We read, *"Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow"* (1 Peter 1:10-11).

But the mystery was concealed until the appointed time, as we read, *"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations"* (Romans 16:25-26). Christ came into the world for the express purpose of giving Himself as a ransom for our sins. Thiessen says, "His death was not an afterthought or an accident, but the accomplishment of a divine purpose in connection with the incarnation. The incarnation is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end, and that end is the redemption of the lost through the Lord's death on the cross."^{xvii}

Christ's death, burial, and resurrection are two fundamental truths of the Gospel; it is our "good news" of God's salvation. Paul said, *"I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures"* (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The death of Christ was essential for our salvation, and the only basis for God to forgive our sins was by His Son bearing the penalty of the sinner's guilt.^{xviii}

Repentance is required, but alone is insufficient; a payment was demanded. God does not exclusively forgive because He loves us. Instead, His infinite love for us caused Him to give His only begotten son to become a ransom for our sins. Thereby demonstrating His love for us on the cross: *"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins"* (1 John 4:10); *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

To comprehend the measure of God's sacrifice, Abraham was tested by the Lord: *"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you"* (Genesis 22:2). Judaism forbids human sacrifice, but this was no ordinary test. Abraham comforted his son, saying: *"My son, God will provide [Yireh in Hebrew, the God who sees] for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering"*

(Genesis 22:8). God, foreseeing our depraved condition, saw for Himself a lamb, the Lamb of God who would become our Passover Sacrifice: *"For He said, 'Surely they are My people, Children who will not lie.' So He became their Savior" (Isaiah 63:8).*

Jesus, God incarnate, settled a debt we could never pay. He is God, and His vicarious sacrifice, meaning substitute from the word *vicar*, meant everything. God could not convict one mortal man of another's sin. Either all would die, or God had to become our Savior. We read, *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).*^{xxix} Jesus had to take our sin and assume our guilt upon Himself, but He had to do so willingly.^{xx} Jesus's death was a personal sacrifice, God's sacrifice, not an unjust murder or human sacrifice. Jesus said, *"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father" (John 10:17-18).*

Atonement, a translation of the Greek word *katallage*, refers to the full provision of God's salvation through the vicarious sacrifice of His only begotten Son. In scripture, the word means "a covering," appearing once in the New Testament in Romans 5; the more accurate translation is "reconciliation." Paul said, *"We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Romans 5:11).* In the Old Testament, the priests could make atonement for individual trespasses and Israel's national sins. In laying hands, the sins were transferred to the sacrificial animal that was slain as a substitute. The atonement provided a covering for the guilt of the transgressor, thereby making the sins invisible to God. We read, *"You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back" (Isaiah 38:17).*^{xxxi}

But in Christ, we have more than a covering for sin; they are entirely removed from us and transferred to Him. It is as if we had never sinned, and He carries all our sins as though He committed every one of them. Again, we are reminded, *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us." God made Jesus the sinner "that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" without any sin. Only the blood of Christ could serve as a propitiation, once and for all, and not the blood of daily animal sacrifices.*^{xxii} As we read, *"It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me'" (Hebrews 10:4-5).*

Propitiation signifies the turning away of God's wrath by a sacrifice, signifying appeasement; here, *"a body [the body of Christ] You have prepared for Me [for a sacrifice]."*^{xxiii} The understanding of God's wrath is referred to and visibly displayed hundreds of times in the Old Testament and many more in the New.^{xxiv} We read: *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18).*^{xxv} Paul sees Christ's death as God's means of removing His wrath for those who are in Christ, and this is an incredible paradox, that God Himself provided the means of removing His own wrath: *"God will see for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering."*

The Father's love for us moved Him to send forth His only begotten Son to propitiate our sins.^{xxvi} And the love of the Son towards us moved Him to voluntarily give His life for ours. As we read: *"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2); "Then God will rejoice over you as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride" (Isaiah 62:5).* For this reason, Christ came, to be *"Our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17),* and that His propitiation would provide the reconciliation with God for all who receive Him.^{xxvii}

Again, it is *our* need for reconciliation with God because of the enmity brought about by our rebellion and sin. Yet, scripture applies this word of reconciliation to both God and man. Through Christ, our position of hostility is changed to peace and fellowship with God. An His face is again favorable towards us.^{xxviii} These are foreshadowed in the Old Testament "peace offerings."^{xxix} And the Lord's "covenant of peace" spoken by the prophets: *"I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore" (Ezekiel 37:26).*

This "covenant of peace" and "everlasting covenant" is none other than Christ Himself, *"And through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross" (Colossians 1:20).*^{xxx} It is a ransom for our redemption from the claws of Satan's deception, the penalty of the Law, the power of sin over our lives leading to death, and from all evil, including our present mortal body.^{xxxi} The word "redemption" duly means the payment of a sum and the deliverance of the captive, signifying a release or liberation from captivity, slavery, or death by paying the price called a ransom. Hence, we read: *"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).*^{xxxii}

For the church, there is no doubt that Christ died for those who believe and are members of His body.^{xxxiii} The Calvinistic theory of limited atonement is that Christ died only for the elect, whom He had previously chosen. But scripture is clear; Christ died for the world, as we read, *"And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2).*

Christ died for the world. Similarly, the high priest of Israel foreshadowed this corporate atonement in officiating a sacrifice for the entire nation. But that did not absolve each person's accountability to God for their personal sins.^{xxxiv} Likewise, we understand Christ died for all, but not all are saved.^{xxxv} If they believe, not a single person, man, woman, or child is excluded from the blessing offered in Christ's atonement. As we read, *"We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9).*

The key is to "believe." Lewis Sperry Chafer says, "The condition indicated by Christ on which they (the unbeliever) may avoid dying in their sins is not based on His not dying for them but

rather believing in Him.^{xxxvi} This matter of necessity, again, is a personal application, by faith, of the saving grace of Jesus, not that of our parents, spouse, or church leader. Jesus declared: *"Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3)*. And Paul said: *"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*. Jesus's sacrifice is *unlimited* and sufficient for all. But His atonement is *limited* to those who would receive Him.^{xxxvii}

But what about infants or young children too young to understand or verbalize their faith in Christ? Does the grace of God cover them until they come to the age of accountability or moral responsibility?

Again, we are reminded of what Paul said, *"Through one man [Adam's] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned" (Romans 5:12-14)*. All sinned in Adam, even children; therefore, children die because of imputed sin. But not all have yet committed a personal sin, nor are they at the age of accountability to understand the Law of God and its punishment for sin.^{xxxviii}

Jesus loves the little children.^{xxxix} Therefore, if He died for all, then we confidently assume their sins are covered by the blood of Christ—His unlimited sacrifice. King David was comforted knowing that despite his heinous sins against God, David would see his deceased child again. We read: *"But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23)*.

And we take comfort in the same assurance, but also by God's grace through faith, that we have been set free from Satan's snare and the bondage of sin leading to death: *"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people" (Luke 1:68)*; *"That He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles" (Romans 9:23-24)*.

Amen!

ⁱ Duffield, Guy P. and Van Cleave, Nathaniel M. *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*. Foursquare Media. 1910.

ⁱⁱ All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Bible (NKJV) unless otherwise noted, Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982.

ⁱⁱⁱ Matthew 18:1-4.

^{iv} Job 9:32-33. 1 Timothy 2:5.

^v Matthew 9:6, 14:33. Mark 1:1.

^{vi} Numbers 1:53.

^{vii} Altein, Yehudah. *The High Priest's Breastplate (Choshen)*. Chabad.org.

^{viii} Exodus 28:30.

^{ix} Exodus 28:9-12.

^x John 1:14. Hebrews 2:14-17.

^{xi} Ezekiel 11:19. 2 Corinthians 5:17.

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- xii John 21:25.
- xiii Genesis 3:21, 22. Exodus 12. Leviticus 1-7. Numbers 21. John 3:14. Isaiah 53:6-7.
- xiv Psalm 22. Zechariah 13:6-7. Daniel 9:26.
- xv Hebrews 2:14, 9:26. 1 John 3:5. Matthew 29:28.
- xvi Torrey, Reuben Archer. *What the Bible Teaches*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1933. 144.
- xvii Thiessen, Henry Clarence. *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949. 313.
- xviii John 3:14. Matthew 16:21. Luke 17:25, 24:7. Acts 17:3.
- xix 1 Peter 2:22. John 8:46.
- xx Isaiah 53:6. Matthew 20:28. 1 Corinthians 15:3. 2 Corinthians 5:21. 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18. Romans 5:8. John 10:11. Galatians 2:20.
- xxi Psalm 51:9. Micah 7:19.
- xxii Hebrews 10:10.
- xxiii Romans 3:25. 1 John 2:2.
- xxiv Harrison, Everett F., ed. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1960. 425.
- xxv John 3:36. Ephesians 5:6. Romans 2:5, 5:9. 1 Thessalonians 1:10. Hebrews 3:11. Revelation 19:15.
- xxvi 1 John 4:10.
- xxvii 1 John 2:2.
- xxviii Isaiah 8:17, 54:8, 59:2, 64:7,
- xxix Numbers 10:10.
- xxx Romans 5:10. Colossians 1:21.
- xxxi Galatians 3:13. Romans 6:2, 6:6, 6:12-14, 7:4, 8:23. Titus 2:14. 1 Peter 1:18-19. 2 Timothy 2:26. Hebrews 2:14-15. Galatians 1:4. Ephesians 1:14. Luke 21:28.
- xxxii Hebrews 9:12.
- xxxiii Ephesians 5:25-27. John 10:15, 17:9-11.
- xxxiv John 8:24.
- xxxv Isaiah 53:6. John 1:29. 1 Timothy 2:6. 2 Peter 2:1. Romans 4:15. 1 Corinthians 8:11. Hebrews 2:9.
- xxxvi Chafer, Lewis Sperry. *Systematic Theology*. Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947, III. 97.
- xxxvii Evans, William E. *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*. Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1912. 79.
- xxxviii The age of accountability is not found in scripture. In Jewish tradition, boys reach the age of accountability at 13, and girls as 12. One verse in Isaiah gives us an indication: "*For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings*" (Isaiah 7:16).
- xxxix Matthew 18:6, 19:14.