

LESSON ESSENTIALS

UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

LESSON 5: WHAT IS SALVATION ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE?

People from different worldviews are bound to have differing definitions of salvation. This lesson will help you understand their viewpoints so that you can better share God's plan of salvation with them.

While salvation literally means to be saved or rescued from danger, from a spiritual point of view it means freedom from sins and the consequences of those sins. Read on to find out more about how you can have this freedom and share this amazing message with your friends.

Salvation is a free gift promised to those who believe that Jesus paid the price for their sins. Wouldn't you want this guilt-free life?

REFLECT

Other faiths preach that salvation can be achieved through good deeds, through faithful devotion and/or through gaining knowledge. The Bible on the other hand is clear that “The wages of sin is death, and the free gift of God is eternal life.”

(Romans 6:23)

Who doesn't like receiving a gift? That's precisely what salvation is: a free gift. This doctrine is foundational to the Christian faith and sets it apart from the other faiths of the world. While other religions explain salvation as a reward for doing something, Christians consider salvation as a gift to be received.

In Biblical terms, salvation means to give freedom, to release, or to rescue. Remember that passage in the Gospels where Peter is trying to walk on water, just like Jesus, and then starts to sink when he starts to doubt? He then shouts out to Jesus, asking Him to 'save' him. As shown in this passage, salvation in the Bible can mean to save from danger or consequence. But the Bible also talks about salvation as being saved from the presence and the consequences of one's sin (eternal separation from God). Other faiths, however, preach that salvation can be achieved through good deeds (perhaps only if they exceed your bad deeds), through faithful devotion and/or through gaining knowledge. The Bible on the other hand is clear that “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). This means that no amount of righteous or religious acts can cover up even the smallest sin we commit. Our offenses are committed against an infinitely good God – it does not matter what good deeds we do, we will never measure up to his level. Having descended from Adam, we are born into sin. Isaiah 64:6 says “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment; we all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.” But in spite of our shortcomings and our sinfulness from birth, God in His love has saved us from the punishment of our sins.

Sending Jesus, like His name means (Saviour - Matthew 1:21), is God's way of rescuing a world that is broken and will never heal on its own. We all stand guilty in God's legal court, but as our loving Creator He does not have the heart to punish us. So he provided us with Jesus, the one and only way to be saved. This important aspect of our faith is well substantiated in Acts 4:12, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” We shouldn't forget to refer to this passage when we are reaching out to someone from another faith.

Jesus is the centre of our faith. Other religions claim that we can be forgiven of our sin if we offer a sacrifice to 'appease' God, or visit temples, or do a good deed that is bigger than the bad one. But the Bible tells us that Jesus has already offered His life as a sacrifice for the payment of many. Since we could never reach God in our imperfection, He reached out to us. In John 3:16, we see that "God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." All we need to do is believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and we are saved!

Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross is God's requirement for full atonement. It needed to be a human sacrifice: Only a man can die in the place of another in order for God to forgive his sins and for God to still be just. This sacrifice had to be a sinless sacrifice: Only a man who has not sinned can die for another.

The perfect sacrifice of Jesus fulfilled these rules. To top it all, it was the loving sacrifice of God Himself! God's Word declares Christ's perfection in many ways. Christ is God who manifested Himself in the form of human flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus did not inherit sin like the rest of mankind who inherit sin from Adam. God's Word says that Jesus Christ was in all points tempted as we are, yet was without sin!

Only a sinless God could take away the punishment for our sins. Hebrews 10:4 reveals, "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Verse 10 says, "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all", and verse 14 states "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." Through His perfect sacrifice of death on the cross, our sins are atoned for. Ephesians 1:7 says, "in Christ, we have redemption through His blood and forgiveness of sins." Mark 10:45 and 1 Corinthians 7:23 also reinforce this point. Jesus' sacrifice has not only paid our debt, but it also assures us of our forgiveness, so that we can lead guilt-free, abundant lives.

The Bible tells us that Jesus has already offered His life as a sacrifice for the ransom of many. Since we could never reach up to God, He reached down to us.

Since the Lord Jesus Christ has paid the penalty of sin on behalf of the sinner, God eternally closes the account of sin for believers. Wouldn't you want to steer clear of all legal hassles in God's court of justice? Jesus is just waiting to write off your debts.

Even as we consider Jesus' selfless sacrifice, let us not forget that the Trinity was involved in this great work of salvation.

Jesus' sacrifice was for all of mankind. 1 John 4:14 states, "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the World." This means that the free gift of salvation is available to all who believe in Jesus and accept His sacrifice (John 6:28, 29). Salvation is received by faith alone – it is a process of realising who God is, understanding how our sinful state has affected God, knowing that God provides salvation through His Son, and believing in Jesus' death and resurrection.

The result of saving faith is repentance. Acts 20:21 says, "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance means a complete change of mind towards God, self and sin. Repentance also recognizes our need for forgiveness from God for all sins committed, knowing that the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sins and God forgives us willingly. When you are saved, you are also justified, knowing that the Holy God releases a believing sinner of all charges and counts him to be a righteous person. Since the Lord Jesus Christ has paid the penalty of sin on behalf of the sinner, God eternally closes the account of sin for believers. Wouldn't you want to avoid a trial in God's court of justice? Jesus is just waiting to write off your debts.

IN REVIEW

- The Bible tells us that everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and that the wages of sin is death.
- But God has provided a way to save everyone - that includes you, me and everybody who has sinned.
- God had a plan to rescue us, to send His own son Jesus to die for our sins on the cross.
- Christ's death on the cross was a sacrifice He made for our sake. And He rose again from the dead, giving us hope for the future.
- Salvation not only saves us from the wrath of God, but also helps us to enjoy a right relationship with God.
- God gives salvation as a gift to mankind; it can be received by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The process of saving faith leads to repentance and forgiveness of sin.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- When the offer of salvation is so easily available to everyone in the world, why do people hesitate to embrace it? What can you do to help them understand the truth?
- What are some of the key elements that your salvation message should contain?
- How can you help your friends from different religious backgrounds change their view of salvation, while communicating the truth in love?
- What changes can you trace in your life ever since you truly understood the meaning of salvation?

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