

# JUDGMENT, JUSTIFICATION AND SALVATION

Many questions have arisen concerning the Biblical teaching of judgment, justification and salvation. Most often these concepts are looked upon as being essentially related views of the same thing, i.e., justification is the price paid for salvation and salvation is the answer to the threat of what might occur in judgment. In a sense this is true, but it represents less than a full understanding of the situation. Over the ages this over-simplified concept has led to gross misunderstanding of God's purpose and activities in the world. It is very important for the mature disciple to understand the Biblical concepts of judgment, justification and salvation.

## 1. JUDGMENT

Jesus serves as the author and perfecter of faith (Hebrews 12:2). We may look to Him as the example in order to learn what will ultimately happen in our case. Specifically, we may divide our existence into six stages:

- |                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| (1) creation      | (4) resurrection    |
| (2) physical life | (5) judgment        |
| (3) death         | (6) eternal destiny |

There may be some question concerning Jesus' creation; but otherwise, we see Him experience all of these steps. We in our lives will follow His pattern.

As we study Scripture, we find that there are at least three distinct judgments given which lead to an eternal destiny:

- The first resurrection-judgment sequence occurred to Jesus after the cross. He announced that He had been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). This was as a result of His Father's evaluation of Him. He was found worthy (Revelation 5:9).
- A second resurrection and judgment is described by John in Revelation 20:1-6. Here the ones being judged are, most probably, those souls included in the body of Messiah. "I SAW THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO HAD BEEN BEHEADED BECAUSE OF THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS AND BECAUSE OF THE WORD OF GOD..." (Revelation 20:4a). They are evaluated and reign with Messiah for 1000 years (Revelation 20:6).
- Finally, the last judgment is described in Revelation 20:11-15. Here every other soul that has ever lived will be judged. Some will be accepted into

life and some will be forever rejected to the Lake of Fire.

Scripture admonishes us to let a thing be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6 and Matthew 18:16). As we consider judgment, let us follow this advise. We will take three prominent individuals from Scripture and investigate what they saw concerning judgment.

The first witness is Jesus. Jesus spoke of judgment in John 5:28-29: "DO NOT MARVEL AT THIS; FOR AN HOUR IS COMING, IN WHICH ALL WHO ARE IN THE TOMBS SHALL HEAR HIS VOICE, AND SHALL COME FORTH; THOSE WHO DID THE GOOD DEEDS, TO A RESURRECTION OF LIFE, THOSE WHO COMMITTED THE EVIL DEEDS TO A RESURRECTION OF JUDGMENT". Note that the basis for judgment is the deeds of this life. God will judge according to what we have done. Another example where Jesus spoke explicitly of judgment is Matthew 25:31-46. Here the nations are judged. The Greek word used for nations is "ethnos" which means the gentiles or "goyim" from Hebrew. These are judged on the basis of how they responded to God's Servant. This probably means Messiah, but could easily include Israel also. At any rate, judgment is based on what has been done, that is, the deeds of this life.

A second witness will now be considered. Because of this man's writings concerning salvation, he might be thought to be an unlikely witness. His name is Paul. The only place that Paul spoke of judgment to any depth is recorded in Romans 2:5-16. We see that Paul is in complete harmony with Jesus in stating that the basis for judgment is the deeds of this life (Romans 2:6-8). He proclaims that the "DOERS OF THE LAW WILL BE JUSTIFIED" (Romans 2:13b).

Another witness whom we will consider is John. With the possible exception of Jesus, John probably had more to say concerning judgment than any other writer in Scripture. Chapter 20 of the Book of Revelation is devoted to this theme. In particular, the description of final judgment is recorded in Revelation 20:11-15. Again, the basis for judgment is the deeds of this life. "AND THE SEA GAVE UP THE DEAD WHICH WERE IN IT, AND DEATH AND HADES GAVE UP THE DEAD WHICH WERE IN THEM; AND THEY WERE JUDGED, EVERY ONE OF THEM ACCORDING TO THEIR DEEDS" (Revelation 20:13).

Finally in order to show the consistency of Scripture, we will consider one witness from the Hebrew Scriptures. That witness is Ezekiel. Ezekiel describes how God evaluates His people (chapter 33:17-20). They are judged according to their ways (Ezekiel 33:20). Again, the deeds of this life form the basis for judgment.

It must be pointed out that we are never justified by our deeds. Habakkuk wrote that the just shall live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4). Paul wrote that all have been justified to life by the act of Jesus (Romans 5:18). This refers to His death on the cross by which He paid the price that all men (any man) could come to God and be received. Whoever comes, though, must do so believing that God is and that He is the rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). This is faith and it is by such faith that we are justified. In contrast, we can never do so many "good" things that we can present ourselves before God and demand to be accepted. James wrote that real faith was manifested in terms of deeds. He said: "EVEN SO FAITH, IF IT HAS NO WORKS, IS DEAD, BEING BY ITSELF" (James 2:17). Therefore the real faith by which we are justified before God will lead to a series of deeds that are pleasing and

acceptable to God.

From this argument we conclude that the basis for judgment is the deeds of this life. This is in contrast to the popular teaching which maintains that what we confess is important rather than what we do. God evidently thinks otherwise.

### Questions For Review

1. On what basis will all men be judged?
2. If God has already justified all men to life (Romans 5:17), why does anyone have to concern themselves with the question of final judgment?
3. Is God more interested in what we confess or what we do?  
Why do you think He feels that way?

## 2. JUSTIFICATION

The Biblical concept of justification has to do with the price paid for man's acceptance before God. Paul used the Greek term "dikaiosin" (δικαιοσύνη) for the concept of justification. He stated that: "...THROUGH ONE ACT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS THERE RESULTED JUSTIFICATION OF LIFE TO ALL MEN" (Romans 5:18b). Obviously, Paul was speaking of the death of Messiah Jesus on the cross. The death of Messiah Jesus paid the price for all men for all time. This means that all people are "elect" to life. Stated another way the Lord does not wish "FOR ANY TO PERISH BUT FOR ALL TO COME TO REPENTANCE" (2 Peter 3:9). Since God functions outside of the space-time continuum of this physical universe, we believe that this act of justification is just as applicable to those living before the crucifixion as it is to those following it. Hence, when the perfect Lamb suffered death, the price of infinite life was spent for the integrated burden of sin for all mankind.

Just because the price has been paid for all men does not imply that all men will actually receive eternal life. Previously, we concluded that God will judge all men according to the "deeds of this life". He will find some acceptable and some unacceptable depending on what they have done in light of the revelation of God in their lives. Those proving that they demand to remain in rebellion against God will be rejected. However, in the end it will be shown that from God's perspective, He desired all to enter into life and, in fact, made the exact provision in order that this could be realized.

Now the Church has been given this message to proclaim in the world. Paul stated that God has given us "THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION, NAMELY, THAT GOD WAS IN CHRIST RECONCILING THE WORLD TO HIMSELF, NOT COUNTING THEIR TRESPASSES AGAINST THEM, AND HE HAS COMMITTED TO US THE WORD OF

RECONCILIATION" (2 Corinthians 5:18b-19). This is one of the most fundamental functions of the Church in the world. This is a "universal" ministry. Because of confusion in the Church concerning Biblical purpose, this ministry has dominated the vision of the Church to the extent that the Church, itself, became seen as "universal" or catholic.

#### Questions For Review

1. By what specific act were you justified to life?
2. Explain how you became convinced that you had been justified.
3. To whom can the message of reconciliation be preached?

### 3. SALVATION

Now the question often arises, "If I will be judged in terms of what I do, and if the price for my justification has already been paid, what benefit is salvation"? Most of us have been taught that if we don't "get saved" we will certainly be discarded into the "lake of fire". In light of our previous discussion of judgment and justification, we need now to develop a Scriptural view of salvation.

John expressed the main thrust of salvation when he said: "...WE HAVE PASSED OUT OF DEATH INTO LIFE..." (1 John 3:13). In the Messianic Scripture two words are translated into the one English word "life". They are "Zoe" and "Psuche". Zoe denotes a higher spiritual existence, a communion with God; while the second term, Psuche, is identified with the principle of animal life. Death in Scripture always means separation. In the reference above (1 John 3:13), death means separation from an intimate knowledge of and interaction with God. So John said that we had passed from this death into Zoe, from a position separated from personal interaction with God into a position of communion with Him. Salvation is really that process which puts our soul in vital contact with God resulting in an intimate knowledge of Him.

The word in the Messianic Scripture which is actually translated as salvation is "so-tay-ree-ah" (σωτηρια). This word literally means -- a deliverance from molestation of an enemy, preservation, safety, salvation. This is what is achieved through our communion with God.

Salvation in the Hebrew Scripture is often used in terms of national salvation for Israel. The Jewish people were anticipating this when Jesus came. Jesus' closest disciples continued to embrace this concept until after Yom Hashavuot, or the day of Pentecost. In Acts 1:6-8, they asked the resurrected Jesus if this was the time for the restoration, or salvation, of Israel. In Romans 11:26, Paul wrote that all Israel will be saved. He is speaking with a national view of salvation in mind.

Salvation in the Messianic Scripture most frequently pertains to individual salvation. Some examples where individual salvation is spoken of are given below:

"IN HIM, YOU ALSO, AFTER LISTENING TO THE MESSAGE OF TRUTH, THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION - HAVING ALSO BELIEVED, YOU WERE SEALED IN HIM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE" (Ephesians 1:13).

"FOR GOD HAS NOT DESTINED US FOR WRATH, BUT FOR OBTAINING SALVATION THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST" (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

"AND THE LORD WAS ADDING TO THEIR NUMBER DAY BY DAY THOSE WHO WERE BEING SAVED" (Acts 2:47b).

The concept of salvation is almost universally understood today to be exclusively applicable to the individual. If we speak of the national salvation of Israel hardly anyone considers the idea seriously. Thus the situation has been completely reversed since the time of Jesus' ministry in Israel.

Salvation is achieved under the authority of Jesus. There is life in the Father and in Jesus (John 5:26). Jesus Himself said: "I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER, BUT THROUGH ME" (John 14:6). The name of Jesus actually reveals the nature and significance of salvation. Jesus' Hebrew name is Yehoshuah which corresponds to the name Joshua. The name literally means "The covenant God of Israel is my help (or salvation)". Often we see the name shortened to Yeshua which is simply "salvation". For this reason, Scripture states emphatically that: "AND THERE IS SALVATION IN NO ONE ELSE; FOR THERE IS NO OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN AMONG MEN, BY WHICH WE MUST BE SAVED" (Acts 4:12). So the authority for and way to individual salvation comes in Jesus. Ultimately national salvation of Israel will come in the same Name.

Now let us turn to investigate the nature of salvation working in an individual's life. Paul indicated that our justification was completed by Jesus on the cross. In contrast, our salvation is being accomplished by the resurrected Jesus. "MUCH MORE THEN, HAVING NOW BEEN JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD, WE SHALL BE SAVED FROM THE WRATH OF GOD THROUGH HIM. FOR IF WHILE WE WERE ENEMIES, WE WERE RECONCILED TO GOD THROUGH THE DEATH OF HIS SON, MUCH MORE, HAVING BEEN RECONCILED, WE SHALL BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE" (Romans 5:9-10). So our salvation results from what the resurrected Jesus is doing now. Faith is really the process by

which this occurs. Paul also wrote: "FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL, FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION TO EVERY ONE WHO BELIEVES, TO THE JEW FIRST AND ALSO TO THE GREEK. FOR IN IT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IS REVEALED FROM FAITH TO FAITH; AS IT IS WRITTEN `BUT THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH'" (Romans 1:16-17). Peter said that the outcome of your faith is the salvation of your soul (1 Peter 1:9). Our faith interactions with the risen Jesus result in what is referred to as spiritual birth and subsequent growth. The growth which occurs after birth comes by the continual work of God's Spirit as He quickens the truth of the Scriptures and brings revelation to the individual. "...GOD HAS CHOSEN YOU FROM THE BEGINNING FOR SALVATION THROUGH SANCTIFICATION BY THE SPIRIT AND FAITH IN THE TRUTH" (2 Thessalonians 2:13b).

Salvation as defined above depends on an interaction between God and man, thus both parties play a role. The specific role of the individual includes: (1) repenting, (2) calling, (3) believing, (4) confessing and (5) enduring. None of these occur without the work of God's Holy Spirit in the individual's life.

Even though for many an unpleasant note, salvation comes through tribulation in our lives. "ONLY CONDUCT YOURSELVES IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST; SO THAT WHETHER I COME AND SEE YOU OR REMAIN ABSENT, I MAY HEAR OF YOU THAT YOU ARE STANDING FIRM IN ONE SPIRIT, WITH ONE MIND STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL; IN NO WAY ALARMED BY YOUR OPPONENTS - WHICH IS A SIGN OF DESTRUCTION FOR THEM, BUT OF SALVATION FOR YOU, AND THAT TOO, FROM GOD" (Philippians 1:27-28). Also, "SO THEN, MY BELOVED, JUST AS YOU HAVE ALWAYS OBEYED, NOT AS IN MY PRESENCE ONLY, BUT NOW MUCH MORE IN MY ABSENCE, WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING" (Philippians 2:12).

It must be understood that salvation is not an end in itself, but a means to accomplish God's purpose in us. Paul described the man of God in Ephesians 6:12-18 as equipped for battle. Salvation is included as an implement of armor for that soldier. If Paul had envisioned salvation in the manner it is commonly portrayed today, it seems unlikely that he would have pictured it in terms of a helmet. For many today, salvation is seen as the ultimate end in itself because they are looking at the supposed needs of the individual rather than attempting to hear and do God's will.

Finally, our salvation is an on-going process. It will be completed at the return of Jesus to this earth. "WHO ARE PROTECTED BY THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH FOR A SALVATION READY TO BE REVEALED IN THE LAST TIME" (1 Peter 1:5). So we have not yet experienced anything near the fullness of what is yet to come in our salvation.

What are some of the conclusions that can be drawn relative to Messianic salvation?

- (1) Messianic salvation usually refers to individual salvation rather than national salvation.
- (2) National and universal salvation will be manifested in the ages to come.
- (3) Salvation is a process resulting in the protection (restoration) of our souls which is accomplished by intimate contact with God.
- (4) God initiates the process; we respond to Him. Our participation includes: repenting, calling, believing, confessing and enduring.
- (5) The work of the Holy Spirit accomplishes salvation within the individual. Therefore, for salvation to be proceeding within an individual, he must be born of the Spirit or baptized in the Spirit depending on which terminology is meaningful to the individual.
- (6) The Spirit brings us to an intimate knowledge of Jesus and the God of Israel. We are associated with the resurrected Jesus and derive our position from Him.
- (7) The process of our individual salvation will continue until the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.
- (8) Salvation is not an end in itself. Through the process of salvation, the God of Israel makes a covenant with the individual. That individual is added to Messiah and becomes a participant in God's activities now and forever. Much of the process of salvation is preparing the individual for service in the age to come.

The question may be asked; "Why should I desire to be a participant in this salvation?" Because of the honor and glory associated with the calling. We through salvation can know intimately the God of the universe and His unique Son, Jesus. We can become instrumental participants in the ultimate salvation of Israel, the world in general, and even the universe. This is what Paul was referring to when he spoke of: "THE PRIZE OF THE UPWARD CALL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS" (Philippians 3:14b). We can serve God in this unique capacity with the sure knowledge that our lives are not being spent in vain, but that eternal righteousness is being worked through us.

## Questions For Review

1. By what means can an individual be saved (experience salvation)?
2. Distinguish between the Biblical concept of justification and salvation.
3. Explain what your initial experience in salvation was?  
How has that experience continued?
4. Who can experience salvation?
5. Have you shared the testimony of water baptism?  
What do you think water baptism symbolizes?
6. Prepare a short statement outlining your:
  - a. justification experience:
  - b. salvation experience:
  - c. baptism experience:

## 4. CONCLUSION

Every human being faces physical death. After death he will face judgment and will be accepted into eternal life or rejected from eternal life. God paid the price so that every human being could be accepted into eternal life. This is called justification. Not all will respond to the grace of God by repenting and walking in an upright manner before God, but some will. These will be accepted by God into the New Creation. Those refusing to repent will be rejected into the "Lake of Fire". This judgment and justification is universal. It is applicable to every human being.

Beyond simply being justified, some individuals and one nation have been chosen by God to become vessels of His hand in the world. Israel, as a nation is chosen in this manner. The individual spirit-filled believer in Messiah Jesus has also been chosen in this manner. The person or nation that is chosen has the option of salvation. Salvation comes from direct interaction with God. Those chosen have the potential to become vessels of God's outworking in this life and the ages to come. Those accepted into life from Israel will dwell around the city, New Jerusalem, where the Holy One and the Lamb will dwell. Those accepted from those chosen to follow Messiah Jesus will make up the city. Those accepted to life from the nations will dwell outside the city beyond Israel. Those rejected from each group will be separated to the "Lake of Fire".