

THE TWO DIMENSIONS OF SALVATION

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Introduction

Before presenting the two dimensions of salvation it is important to lay the foundation to this important truth. The most significant prediction Jesus made regarding last day events in Matthew 24 is verse 14: *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations* (every tribe, tongue, and people), *and then the end will come* (NKJV).

This prophecy raises two questions. First, what did Jesus mean by *the gospel of the kingdom*? Second, what is the significance of the phrase *in all the world as a witness to all the nations*?

The *gospel of the kingdom* was the key message Jesus preached during His earthly mission (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:14, 15; are a few examples). According to the New Testament, when Adam sinned Satan usurped the dominion of the whole world and became its ruler or prince (Luke 4:5, 6; John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4).

One of the primary reasons Jesus came to this sin cursed world, some 2000 years ago, was to redeem (buy back) the world, especially the human race. This was accomplished at the cross: *Now (at the cross) is the judgment of the world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out* (John 12:31-33). This is what Jesus meant when he proclaimed to the Jews: *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand* (Mark 1:15).

Consequently, when this *gospel of the kingdom* will be proclaimed with a loud cry, *as a witness in all the world to all the nation*, it will become inexcusable for anyone to be lost. This is the *latter rain* and those who deliberately reject this incredible good news of salvation in Christ will be committing the unpardonable sin of *unbelief* and will be responsible for their own eternal damnation (John 3:17, 18; 16:8, 9; Mark 16:15, 16). This, I believe, is what will usher in the Second Advent and the end of the world.

Here is a good example of this final message that was proclaimed to the Jewish nation of the New Testament times: *For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth* (deliberately reject Christ and Him crucified), *there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witness. Of how worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of Grace?* (Hebrews 10:26-29).

This is the unpardonable sin of *unbelief* that Jesus predicted would happen to the Jewish nation for finally rejecting Him as their Messiah (Luke 13:34, 35; John 2:18-21).

The Two Dimensions of Salvation

With this background we can now turn to the two dimensions of salvation. The New Testament presents two dimensions of salvation that are related yet distinct. On the one hand, it presents salvation as an already accomplished fact in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the *objective* reality of the gospel that applies to the entire human race (John 3:17; 17:4; 19:30; Romans 5:18b; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22; 2 Corinthians 5:19).

This accomplished salvation is the fulfillment of the everlasting covenant God made to Abraham, that all the nations of the world will be blessed through one of his descendants (see for example Genesis 12:3). Matthew's gospel confirms this fact in his first chapter, verses 1-16.

On the other hand, the New Testament also presents salvation as a *subjective* experience, to all those who by faith receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior (John 3:16; 5:24; Romans 5:17b; Ephesians 2:8,9).

These two dimensions of salvation must be kept distinct to avoid confusion between the *objective* reality of the gospel and its *subjective* experience. The *objective* reality being the *truth*

as it is in Christ (that which justified or reconciled the entire human race on the cross, Romans 3:23, 24; 5:18; 2 Corinthians 5:19). In contrast, the *subjective* experience is the *application or fruits of the objective gospel* (that which justifies by faith and produces holy living or sanctification in the life of the believers, Ephesians 2:10; 2 Timothy 1:8-10).

You in Christ is the *objective* reality of the gospel message to be preached into *all the world for a witness to all the nations* and refers to what God has *already* accomplished for the entire human race in Christ (Mark 16:15, 16). *Christ in you*, on the other hand, has to do with the Christian life, the application of the objective gospel, and is an *on-going* process, which Christ is continually doing in the life of the believer through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 22-25).

Truth and morality, knowledge and action are distinct but inseparably connected, like the root of a tree and its fruit. Salvation must express itself in behavior, and behavior must embody salvation. Genuine justification by faith (*imputed* righteousness) *always* produces works (*imparted* righteousness, James 2:14-26.). It is for this reason the New Testament teaches that we are justified (declared righteous) by faith *alone* (Romans 3:28; 4:5; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8, 9), but judged by works (Matthew 7:21; 25:34-40; John 5:28-30; Romans 2:5-8; 2 Corinthians 5:10). These works do not contribute to the believer's salvation but demonstrate that one's justification by faith is genuine (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:5, 8; James 2:20-22).

Only when these two dimensions of salvation are clearly understood, kept distinct, and yet linked together, does the gospel become *the power of God unto salvation* to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). Unfortunately, neither Calvinism (with its Limited Atonement) nor Arminianism (with its Provisional Salvation) present the full truth of the *objective* reality of the gospel, as presented in Ephesians 2:5, 6: *even when we were dead in trespasses* (referring to verse 1), *made us alive **together** with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up **together**, and made us sit **together** in heavenly places in Christ Jesus* (NKJV, emphasis mine—note also all the verbs are in the *aorist* tense).

Distinction Between the Two Dimensions of Salvation

The following are the main distinctions between the *objective* reality of the gospel, *You in Christ*, and its fruits or its *subjective* experience, *Christ in You*:

“YOU IN CHRIST”—Objective

1. Universal

Includes the entire human race.

1Tim. 2:5-7; 4:9,10; Titus 2:11.

2. Unconditional

By Grace alone.

Rom. 5:6-10; Eph. 2:8, 9.

3. A finished work

We stand complete in Christ.

Jn. 17:4; 19:30; Col. 2:10.

4. Meritorious

Qualifies us for heaven.

Rom.9:30-32;10:4;Gal.5:4.

“CHRIST IN YOU”—Subjective

1. Individual

Applies only to believers.

Mk. 16:15,16; Jn. 5:24

2. Conditional

By Faith alone.

Jn. 3:16; Heb. 10:38,39.

3. An on-going process

Christian experience is on-going.

Rom. 8:24,25; 2 Pet. 1:3-8.

4. Demonstrative

Evidence of salvation.

Matt. 5:13-16; Jn. 13:34,35.

The phrase *in Christ* (the central theme of Paul's theology) is applied *objectively* as well as *subjectively* in the New Testament. But it must be remembered, that the *subjective* experience is *always* based on the *objective* facts of the gospel; that which was realized in the holy history of Christ some 2000 years ago (1 Corinthians 3:11-13). A good example is Paul's defense of the resurrection of the believers in 1 Corinthians 15:12-22, based on Christ's resurrection.

The fundamental truth of the *in Christ* motif is that God united our corporate condemned human life (Gk. *bios*), to Christ's eternal divine life (Gk. *Zoe*) at the incarnation, thus legally qualifying Him to be the last Adam, mankind's substitute and representative (1 Corinthians 15:45). Hence by His perfect life, sacrificial death and resurrection God re-wrote mankind's

history, giving humanity a new status in which the entire human race stands legally and objectively justified in Christ, that is, reconciled to God and accepted *in the Beloved* (Romans 3:22-24; 5:18; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Ephesians 1:3-6; 2:4-6; DA 113).

The Humanity of our Savior

It is for this reason EGW states: *The humanity of the Son of God, is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study* (Selected Messages 1:244). Unfortunately, some (mostly the independent ministries) insist that Christ *had* a sinful human nature (making Him a sinner in need of a Savior), instead of stating He *assumed* our sinful nature in order to be the Savior of the world (note the word *made* or *became* [i.e. *assumed*] when referring to Christ's humanity in John 1:14; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 2:17; and *likeness* [Gk. *homoiomati*, meaning *identified* or *similar*] in Romans 8:3).

This is how Mark Galli, senior managing editor of *Christianity Today*, correctly describes the humanity of Christ: *And he (Jesus) came to live among us, taking on not just a human body, but flesh, that is, the brokenness and the sinfulness of humanity. He has become the (corporate) sinner who deserves to die, and he has died on the cross, for the very people who put him on the cross, that they might know who he really is* (CT. Volume 56, Number 4, April 2012, page 34).

More and more New Testament Scholars are presenting the full truth regarding Christ's human nature. Here are some examples:

“More recently, on the strength of lexical studies suggesting that *homoioima* (Romans 8:3) in Paul often means not ‘likeness’ or ‘copy,’ but ‘form’ or ‘full expression,’ this phrase has been interpreted to mean that Christ took on actual fallen, human nature. Paul’s purpose here, it is argued, is to highlight the full identification of Christ with the human situation.” (*The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary, Romans 1-8*. Moody Press).

“In stark contrast to the situation of ‘impossibility’ under the law came the action of God. The ‘sending’ statement conveys a sense of divine ‘invasion from outside’ into the human realm, while also stressing the depth of divine identification with the human condition.... Being sent ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh’ meant full entry into the human situation of ‘flesh sold into slavery under sin’ (Rom. 7:14). All the weakness, temptations and proneness to sin that the tradition characterizes as ‘flesh’ Christ felt and suffered in his own person, while remaining personally sinless (2 Cor. 5:21).” (*Sacra Pagina Series*, Vol. 6. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota).

“Romans 8:3. The word **likeness** (cf. Phil. 2:7) might seem to imply a limitation of Christ’s real humanity, but the context and Paul’s total view of Christ show that no such implication is intended. Christ was fully human and therefore sinful in the objective sense of sin (Rom. 5:12-14) though not in the sense of being guilty, his life provided the complete antithesis to Adam’s disobedience (Rom. 5:18-19; cf. 1 Cor. 5:21a; on sinful flesh, lit. ‘flesh of sin.’...He had to expose himself to sin and death without any immunity. By so doing he exhausted their power and robbed them of their rights (cf. Gal. 3:13).” *The Interpreter’s one Volume Commentary of the Bible*. (Abingdon Press—Nashville and New York).

“If we recognize that Paul believed it was fallen human nature which the Son of God assumed, we shall probably be inclined to see here also a reference to the unintermittent warfare of His whole earthly life by which He forced our rebellious nature to render a perfect obedience to God” (*The International Critical Commentary (Romans 8:3*, 1982 ed), edited by Cranfield

To the above could be added *Commentary on Romans* (8:3) by Anders Nygren; *Harper's Commentary on Romans* (8:3) and *Word Biblical Commentary*, on Romans (8:3), Vol. 38A, by James Dunn; etc, all of which clearly state that Christ assumed our fallen sinful human nature at the incarnation in order to be our complete Savior.

To this I would especially like to add Harry Johnson's doctoral dissertation from London University, *The Humanity of our Saviour* (Epworth Press, 1962). He takes the post-fall view of Christ's humanity, proving both historically, as well as Biblically, what Christ did not assume He could not redeem.

Note how Ellen G. White expressed this truth: *He took upon His sinless (divine) nature our sinful (human) nature, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted* (Medical Ministry, 181).

For a further presentation of this important subject I suggest reading my book *Saviour of The World*, published by Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1996 (available from jacksequeiraministries@comcast.net).

On the cross the corporate condemned life of the entire human race (Gk. *bios*) died forever, the eternal death, in Christ, thus satisfying the justice of God's law (2 Corinthians 5:14). Since God so loved the world, He gave the eternal life of His Son (Gk. *Zoe*) to the human race in Christ in the resurrection (John 3:16; 2 Timothy 1:8-10). This is God's supreme gift to mankind made effective individually by faith (1 John 5:11, 12; 2 Corinthians 5:17). This is *justification by faith* or *imputed* righteousness (in complete opposition to *justification by works*, see Rom. 9:30-33).

The Two Adams

In Romans 5:12-21, Paul uses Adam as a type or pattern of Christ, the last Adam. These two men are similar in *only* one sense. What each did affected the entire human race. Paul bases this truth on Biblical solidarity, the many in one, (see for example Genesis 25:21-25—this is a

foreign concept to the western mind). In creating Adam God did not create an individual but the entire human race in him (Genesis 5:1, 2; Acts 17:26). Likewise, at the incarnation God united the divine eternal life of Christ (Gk. *Zoe*) to the corporate life of the human race (Gk. *bios*) that stood condemned to death, thus creating the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45).

Using the argument of Hebrews 7:7-10, we may say that the entire human race was *in the loins of Adam* when he sinned. Likewise, the entire human race was *in the loins of Christ's humanity* when He obeyed. These are *objective* realities. The only difference is that we inherit *subjectively* from Adam the condemnation unto death at our birth, while the righteousness of Christ is God's supreme gift to mankind, which has to be received by faith for it to be experienced *subjectively* (Romans 5:17).

In this sense the *objective* facts of the gospel may be described as a provision or an offer that is made effective by faith alone (1 Corinthians 3:11-13). However, this provision must not be confused with the word *provisional* as taught by Arminianism, that on the cross Christ did not actually secure salvation for anyone but only made it possible for all mankind to be saved.

All true Christian experience is based on the *objective* reality of the gospel. Therefore, if our knowledge of the *objective* gospel is incomplete so will be our experience. Likewise, if our knowledge of the *objective* facts of the gospel is incorrect so will be our experience.

It is for this very reason, I believe, Satan has hidden the full *objective* reality of the gospel in darkness, *the incredible good news of great joy for all the people* (Luke 2:10; 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4). This *objective* gospel, I believe, is the *Everlasting gospel* of Revelation 14 God has raised the Advent Movement to proclaim to the world before the end comes, thus fulfilling Matthew 24:14. ***May that day come soon.***

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