

Salvation

Salvation in the Bible is much broader than we might traditionally think. There are actually three aspects of salvation, and we do well to understand and distinguish them.

1. **Past Salvation.** This is salvation from the penalty of our sins. It involves forgiveness of sins in the eternal sense, and justification by faith. It even involves the indwelling Spirit of God, conscious peace with God, intelligence as to our standing in Christ, and deliverance from sin (Titus 2:11; Eph. 1:13; Rom. 1:16; Rom. 8:24; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:2; Eph. 2:5,8; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:5; 1 Tim. 1:15).
2. **Present Salvation.** Sometimes salvation has to do with being preserved spirit, soul, and body in this life. Christ is in heaven living for us now as our High Priest and our Advocate, giving us strength for the path, and restoring us when we fall (Rom. 5:10; 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:2; 1 Tim. 4:16; Heb. 7:25; Jam. 1:21).
3. **Future Salvation.** Sometimes salvation is looked at as something that we will receive at the end of our pathway when we are caught up to heaven at the rapture. Ultimately, our physical bodies are still under the curse of sin; that will be removed at the rapture when we are given glorified bodies. We also are living in the world that is fast coming under judgment; we will be taken up before the Tribulation begins and therefore saved from the coming wrath (Rom. 5:9; Rom. 13:11; Phil. 3:20; 1 Pet. 1:5; 1 Thess. 5:8-9).

A Christian who knows their sins forgiven, has peace with God, and enjoys deliverance from sin can say "I am saved". He can also acknowledge the work that Christ is doing in heaven, the progressive nature of Christian growth, the providence of God, etc. and say "I am being saved". He can also look forward with anticipation to the coming of Christ, to a glorified body, to the Father's House and say "I will be saved".

The Savior. In all these aspects, Jesus is our Savior. Each aspect is connected with Him in some way:

1. Our past salvation is connected with His death and resurrection.
2. Our present salvation is connected with His life now glorified at God's right hand.
3. Our future salvation is connected with His coming again!

The Shepherd. As the One who *died* for us He is the GOOD SHEPHERD (past, John 10:11),

as the One who *lives* for us He is the GREAT SHEPHERD (present, Heb. 13:20), and as the One who is *coming again* for us He is the CHIEF SHEPHERD (future, 1 Pet. 5:4)!

We see all three of these aspects in a short series of verses in Hebrews 9 (out of order), connected with three appearances of our Savior:

Appearance on Earth at His First Coming
Past Salvation
 Heb. 9:25-28a

“Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;”

Appearance in Heaven between His Comings
Present Salvation
 Heb. 9:24

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, [which are] the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:”

Appearance on Earth at His Second Coming
Future Salvation
 Heb. 9:28b

“and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

Other aspects of salvation include:

- **Salvation by fire** ([1 Cor. 3:15](#)). This is an unusual aspect of salvation that occurs in the case of a believer wastes all their efforts in this life building according to man’s wisdom. When their whole life is burned up at the judgment seat of Christ they will finally learn the lesson of building on the Rock. In this way, their minds will be fitted for eternity, and they will “be saved, so as by fire”.
- **Salvation of the local assembly** ([Phil. 2:12](#)). This is a collective aspect of salvation in which we Christians are called to play a part. In Philippi the assembly was going on well for the most part, but disagreements were threatening the unity of the assembly. If those issues were not worked out, eventually the assembly would become ineffective or it would experience a division. Paul exhorts them to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”. This has to do with the preservation of the local assembly.
- **Salvation by baptism.** [Baptism](#) is the way a person is outwardly disconnected with the world and is brought onto Christian ground in association with Christ. It can’t

save inwardly or for eternity, but it can and does save outwardly for the present time. For example, Paul stood in a questionable place outwardly until he was baptized (Acts 22:16). His sins were gone before God the moment he was justified by faith, but he still needed to disconnect himself outwardly from his sins before conversion. Baptism doesn't actually put away "the filth of the flesh", but by disconnecting you with the world which will shortly be judged, it puts you into a place where you can "demand a good conscience" (1 Peter 3:20-21; Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Acts 2:40-41).

- **Salvation as a grand scheme.** There are some places where "God's salvation" is mentioned in the sense of His grand scheme for delivering the world from the consequences of sins. (Luke 2:30; 3:6; Rev. 7:10; 12:10; 19:1)

Context is key. Understanding which aspect of salvation is being referred to in scripture requires examination of the context. Often Christians jump to "salvation from our sins" as the *de facto* meaning of salvation everywhere, but that is a mistake. It usually isn't salvation from the penalty of our sins that is in view.