

# DOCTRINE 1

## UNIT EIGHT THE GOD WHO SAVES

### INTRODUCTION

- ↳ God is so powerful that he can create by a word of command.
- ↳ Adam and Eve then assaulted God's authority precisely over the issue of his word.
- ↳ Justice demands that those guilty of such an attack on God's sovereignty should be punished.
- ↳ Could humans be saved from the righteous wrath of God? And, who could save them?
- ↳ God acts to accomplish and restore his purposes.
- ↳ Punishment is accompanied by a promise of blessing.
- ↳ God is faithful to his word but also compassionate - his justice is entirely loving.
- ↳ Such a God must save by his very nature, or be untrue to himself.
- ↳ God is love, and that love is shown in his grace towards sinners who deserve nothing.

## THE PROMISE OF SALVATION

- ↳ The God's first loving deed towards Adam and Eve was to spare them, not destroy them completely.
- ↳ The Old Testament contains many instances of God's saving deeds for his people.
- ↳ These deeds are often accompanied by promises of hope for the future.

## THE PATTERN OF SALVATION

- ↳ The major theme of the Bible is the salvation of the human race and the re-establishment of the Kingdom of God in universal terms.
- ↳ Many of the saving events of the Bible are to do with salvation from earthly enemies, but in these we can see a pattern of the way God acts.
- ↳ This pattern is shown in the account of Noah and the flood (Genesis 6-9).
  - HUMAN SINFULNESS (Genesis 6:5): continuing the rebellion of Adam by rejecting the kingly rule of God.
  - DIVINE JUDGEMENT (Genesis 6:7): there can be no doubt that this action was justified.
  - DIVINE GRACE (Genesis 6:8): Noah was not without sin, but God did not destroy all human beings.
  - DIVINE RULE (Genesis 9:1-17): God promised not to destroy the world again, and re-establishes his rule with promises similar to those given to Adam.

## THE PEOPLE OF SALVATION

↳ We might imagine that God could have used an instantaneous, universal method of salvation.

↳ He was not, however, dealing with physical problems but deep spiritual and moral issues.

↳ God chose to gather a special people, who would be taught to live under his rule and from whom the saviour of the world would come.

↳ Israel started as a family rather than a nation – Abraham was selected as the one to receive the covenantal promises.

↳ Salvation History

- The stories of salvation have in common the suffering of the people, an appeal to God and his intervention on their behalf.
- There were many such moments through Israel's history, but the one that set the pattern was the rescue from Egypt described in the book of Exodus.
- One of the key promises to Abraham was that his descendants would occupy the land of Canaan.
- It was because of this that the release of the people was followed by the trek to the promised land – that it took so long was the fault of the people.
- God's purpose was that the people should live in peace and joy under his rule.
- Having had to wait for the disobedient generation to die, when they reached the promised land, they were still sinful.
- Eventually they were removed from the land in a devastating exile.

- Another element in the history of God's people was the role played by human leaders.
- Many prophets, judges, priests and kings were allowed by God to be his human instruments as he ruled over his people.
- Even the best were flawed by sin.

## ↳ Salvation Structures

- When God saved his people from Egypt, he gave them the law to be the guide to their national life.
- God had always expected obedience from his covenant partners, such as Abraham, but now the details of this were given in a most extensive form.
- These laws met their needs at that time, and it is not necessary to act on them all now, such as the food laws.
- Nonetheless, God was the author of the law and as he consistent and truthful, the principles of the law remain valid to this day.
- A major part of the law is given over to instructions on how Israel was to worship God.
- Provision was made through various feasts and festivals for the people to be reminded of their history and their covenant obligation to God.
- God also raised up prophets amongst his people, to bring his word to the situation before them.
- They took the promises of the covenant and applied them to the situation of their own day.
- God ordained these structures to protect and guide his people, but they couldn't solve the problems of humanity.
- Animal sacrifices were a reminder that sin required the shedding of blood as a punishment, but could not remove the stain of human sin.

## THE BRINGER OF SALVATION

- ↳ The Fulfilment of the Promises
  - Jesus Christ is the focal point of the promises of God – if we are ‘one in Christ’ we are the recipients of all God's covenantal blessings.
  - Many of the promises to Abraham were fulfilled – his descendants became a great nation and lived in the land that had been promised to them.
  - However, not all the people had been blessed, and the land was an uncertain possession.
  - Jesus Christ is the perfect fulfilment of the promise – the blessing on all peoples flows from the inclusion of both Jew and Gentile in the gospel.
  - The promises became true by transformation – the promised ‘rest’ of Canaan becomes the great heavenly ‘rest’ of the end of the ages.
  - Unlike Canaan, this land is an incorruptible inheritance which can not be taken away.
  - David was told that “your throne will be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:16).
  - David's dynasty ruled uninterrupted until the exile to Babylon.
  - Jesus Christ is the perfect fulfilment of the promise – Matthew's gospel traces his descent from David.
  - At the end of Matthew's gospel the rule of Jesus is extended to all nations.
  - The gospel message is that Jesus Christ is Lord – to serve him is to serve God.

## ↳ The Fulfilment of the Promises

- The pattern of the Old Testament is sin, judgement, grace and salvation. This is also the pattern of the New Testament.
- When the purpose of the coming of Jesus is described, it is in terms of God's love providing salvation from the judgement which sin deserves (John 3:16).
- Many benefits for the human race flow from the coming of Jesus, but they are not the central concern of the gospel.
- First and foremost, Jesus came to save sinners from the wrath that we deserve by bearing that wrath himself on the cross.

## ↳ The Creation of the People

- God's people lived under his rule within the structures set up by his word.
- Prophets, priests and kings were provided as leaders for the people, as were the land, temple and sacrifice.
- We have seen that these could not solve the real problem of sin and guilt, but did foreshadow the real solution.
- Jesus is the anointed king of God's people, and our true prophet and priest.
- He is the perfect sacrifice and the temple, the meeting place of God and the human race.
- Jesus not only fulfils the expectations of the Jews, he incorporates Gentiles into God's people.
- In the New Testament the titles and functions of God's people are transferred to the Christian church.
- There are not two different peoples of God, but rather a revolution amongst the one people as the fulfilment of all their hopes comes to pass.
- Abraham, David, Moses and Joshua were saved by faith as they trusted the promises of God which looked forward to Christ.
- We are saved by faith in the same saviour, looking back to what he accomplished and forward to his return.

## **CONCLUSION**

- ↳ The whole history of salvation set out in the Old Testament finds its appropriate completion and fulfilment in the New Testament.
- ↳ That is why New Testament readers need an understanding of the Old Testament if they are to know what Jesus Christ is all about.