

“God did know at all times that Christ’s death was as good as accomplished. Consequently, He could grant salvation on the basis of it” (Feinberg 1981: 55).

“Although the Old Testament sacrifices had a relation to justification, their main function, soteriologically speaking, was in the sanctification process” (Feinberg 1981: 69).

WHAT WAS THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OT?

The Holy Spirit was at work in all who believed. Every man since Adam has been born dead in sins, and every man who has believed has needed to be regenerated. This is the work of the Spirit. There is no indication that the believer in the OT was indwelt with the Holy Spirit as we are since Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be with his church.

GOING FURTHER

How does your understanding of faith and salvation in the OT affect your thinking about your own faith and salvation?

What is similar and what is different with regard to obedience for the OT and NT believer?

If you are thankful that you are not living in the time of the OT, explain why.

PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT STUDY

Read the book of Joshua, preferably in one sitting. (You may skim the lists in chapters 12-21.) What is the message of the book? How does Joshua relate to Gen-Deut? As you read, be thinking about promise/fulfillment, rest, and covenant faithfulness.

SOURCES CITED

- John S. Feinberg, “Salvation in the Old Testament.” In *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, 39–77. Moody, 1981.
- Hobart E. Freeman, “The Problem of the Efficacy of the Old Testament Sacrifices.” *Grace Journal* 4 (1963): 17–28.
- Walter C. Kaiser Jr. *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament*. Zondervan, 1987.

SALVATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

PREPARATION FOR THIS STUDY

For our study of salvation in the Old Testament, re-read Gen 3, 15; Exod 6:1-8; Deut 5-6, 10; 30. Read also Ps 34; Isa 12, 55; Joel 2.

Consider: How was one saved in the Old Testament? What role did obedience play in salvation? How is salvation different today?

WAS SALVATION BY WORKS IN THE OT?

“Too many contemporary readers come to the unfortunate conclusion that the salvation offered in the OT is on a do-it-yourself basis and therefore totally out of harmony with the offer graciously extended in the NT” (Kaiser 1987: 121).

Old Scofield Reference Bible: “As a dispensation, grace begins with the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 3:24-26; 4:24, 25). The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ, with good works as a fruit of salvation” (cited Feinberg 1981: 42). This is wrong.

Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of DTS: “True to the Jewish dispensation, [Jesus] said with reference to the law of Moses: ‘This do and thou shalt live’; but when contemplating the cross and Himself as the bread come down from heaven to give His life for the world, He said: ‘This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he [God] hath sent’ (John 6:29). These opposing principles are not to be reconciled. They indicate that fundamental distinction which must exist between those principles that obtain in an age of law, on the one hand, and an age of grace, on the other hand” (cited in Kaiser 1987: 126). This is wrong.

The sinfulness of all men is readily apparent throughout the OT. It is demonstrated in the lives of even such great men as Noah, Abraham, and Moses. It is explicit in Gen 6:5, Ps 14:3, 53:2-3.

The laws were difficult to obey because of the sinfulness of man's heart. Every man would stumble and fall short. Every man would realize that he was not capable of loving God fully (by not sinning).

God commanded the people to "circumcise their hearts" (Deut 10:16). This metaphor speaks to the removal of the skin of stubbornness in man's intellect, emotions, and will. Man was commanded to submit to God in a heart operation. The circumcision of the flesh pointed to the need for the circumcision of the heart. A heart circumcision was the only way that the people could love God with all their heart (Deut 30:6).

God's laws in the Mosaic Covenant do not allow for a perfunctory performance of duty. One could not "just obey" without believing in a way that pleased God. God commanded the Israelites to "rejoice," (Deut 12:7), to "fear" him (Deut 6:13), to put these commandments upon their hearts (Deut 6:6), and to delight in his Word (Ps 1, 119). This required faith.

WHAT FAITH WAS NECESSARY IN THE OT?

The content of God's revelation changed through time. Man was responsible to believe the revealed word of God, not more and not less. As God gradually revealed himself, man was responsible to believe what he had said.

Noah believed God and built an ark in which God saved him. Abraham believed God's promise to him of a seed and it was credited to him as righteousness. He acted on that faith in demonstrating his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac, believing that God would fulfill his promises even so.

God gradually revealed more details of how he would save the one who believed in him. He revealed that he would bring one who was the seed of woman, he would be a righteous sufferer, he would die for the sins of others (Isa 53).

"During the time of law it became more clearly evident that a person would have to be sacrificed for sin (Isa. 53; Dan. 9:24-26). God's suffering servant, the promised Messiah, would have to die for the sins of His people" (Feinberg 1981: 60).

IF SALVATION IS BY FAITH, WHAT IS ROLE OF WORKS?

Acceptable works are those which flow from faith. Works without faith are unacceptable (Isa 1:11-19; Jer 7:21-23; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8). Faith always results in obedience.

"It is not, for example, the performance of the sacrifices or a belief in the sacrificial system per se that saved someone living under the Mosaic law. Instead, what saved a person then was a commitment to the God who had revealed that sin was to be expiated through sacrifices made in faith that God would give atonement" (Feinberg 1981: 57).

HOW DID SACRIFICES WORK IN THE OT?

An OT believer received forgiveness when he offered a sacrifice in accordance with what God had commanded, but the basis for that forgiveness was not the dead animal but the future death of the Messiah.

"The only solution is to take both the OT and NT statements seriously. We conclude then, with Hobart Freeman, that the OT sacrifices were *subjectively efficacious*, in that the sinner did receive full relief based on the clear declaration of God's appointed servant. But it is just as clear that the sacrifices of bulls and goats were *not in themselves* expiatory and efficacious. The most these sacrifices could do was to point to the need for a perfect, living substitute who would, in the timing of God, ransom and deliver all from the debt, guilt, and effects of their sin. Thus the OT sacrifices were not *objectively* efficacious; but then neither did the OT ever claim that the blood of these bulls and goats was inherently effective" (Kaiser 1987: 134).