

Salvation – its 2 Sides

The prophets proclaimed salvation: *“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”* For a fallen world the Old Testament prophets had 2 central themes on the subject of salvation: the *“sufferings of Christ [Messiah]”* and *“the glory that should follow”*.

On one hand they presented a suffering Messiah. One whose visage would be defaced more than any man. One rejected and hated by many. One forsaken by all including God Himself. One who would taste the *“dust of death”*. One whose bones would be out of joint. One who was laughed at. One who would be taunted with vinegar in His thirst. One whose hands and feet would be pierced. And yet one who would display no power in resisting such. As a lamb being slaughtered, would be silent without a word of protest.

Yet on the other hand these same prophets presented a Messiah as a mighty warrior crushing the oppressing and sinful world powers. One whose glorious clothes would be stained red – not with His own blood – but with human blood from the massive slaughter of sinful nations. One who would declare war on the enemies of Israel to liberate them to serve God without fear. One who would, in His fury, turn the world upside down with massive earthquakes. One who would rule the nations with justice and peace for all.

So which portrait is accurate?

This brings us to the two aspects of God’s salvation.

1. There is personal salvation. The individual because of his sin has the sentence of God’s eternal judgment upon him - death. He needs to be saved from such if possible.
2. There is political salvation. God’s people need delivered from godless governments who oppress and suppress them from worshipping and serving God His way.

God’s salvation promises both aspects. We see an example of both aspects of God’s salvation in king Hezekiah in Isaiah 37 and 38. In chapter 37 the Assyrian army is at the threshold of Jerusalem threatening to destroy it. Hezekiah prayed to the Lord and requested, *“save us from **his hand**”*. The Lord answered and said, *“For I will defend this city to save **it**”*. Then the Lord Himself without any human help freed Jerusalem by destroying 185,000 with one angel. This is political salvation: the judgment of God upon the nations so His people can be free. And this is also a salvation without works.

But in chapter 38 we see king Hezekiah praying again. This time it’s not for the city of Jerusalem but for himself. He had received the sentence of death from the Lord. So when the Lord mercifully lengthened his days, he prayed this way, *“**thou hast cast all my sins behind my back**”* and *“**the Lord was ready to save me**”*. This was personal salvation. Judgment was not falling on the nations but upon Hezekiah. And it was the Lord Who personally saved him from death.

Personal Salvation – the Sufferings of Christ. To accomplish our personal salvation, Christ had to suffer for our sins to satisfy the Father’s claim against us. Here judgment did not fall on us the sinner but on His sinless Son. Here Christ Jesus took all our punishment in His death. This is the love of God and Christ! Here *“he was wounded for our transgressions”* and the *“chastisement [punishment] of our peace was upon him”*. Now when a repentant sinner believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he is promised *“thou shalt be saved”*. Saved from the wrath of God and the lake of eternal fire.

Political Salvation – the Glory that should Follow. God also promises salvation from this sinful world and its opposition to the believer. Christ is coming back to earth again. But this time it is in *“power and great glory”* - the crown not the cross. Christians under persecution were comforted with the truth that *“the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God”*. Here judgment falls not on the believer nor on God’s Son but on the nations. He will come in the justice of God to crush the rebellious sinners and then to welcome His faithful saints into His kingdom and *“throne of His glory”*. They are saved and freed from the oppressor and his evil. They will be reigning with Christ to judge the world!

As Peter said, *“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”*. The book of Revelation teaches this governmental or political aspect of salvation in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ: *“Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ”*. This too is a salvation without works. It is not accomplished with Christian education or politics or peace treaties but with the sword of the Lord. As Isaiah presents the mighty warrior who says, *“mine own arm brought salvation unto me”*. Or as Moses said speaking of political salvation: *“stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, ... The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace”*. Amazing grace!

Israel as a whole understood only the aspect of the glorious warrior Messiah. They did not see the suffering Messiah for their sin so they first might be saved before God. They looked at Messiah’s salvation as: *“That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us”*. So they rejected Jesus. But their prophets spoke of both.

May we in the church not make a similar mistake and only focus on one half of this salvation. We understand by His grace (unlike Israel) that we are saved from our judgment by the death of Jesus Christ. And that salvation is without the works of the law, praise the Lord. But so is our political salvation without works. His first coming – the suffering of Christ – saved us personally. His second coming – the glory that should follow – will save His children politically. We are not called to change the world today for the Lord Himself will to do that tomorrow. (Though it is not wrong on a personal level to appeal to governmental powers for justice). This is our glorious hope in Christ.

But how can the crucified Servant be the same mighty Warrior? Is it two Messiahs? Is Christ false for only fulfilling half? The answer is resurrection: *“God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory”*. Now the dying Lamb (cross) and coming world’s King (crown) is the same – the Lord Jesus Christ. He lives! Do you trust His salvation?

{Some Scriptures for the truth of the above teaching. Sufferings of Christ - 1Peter 1:11 / Isa. 52:13- 53:12 / Psa. 22. Glory that should follow - 1Pet. 1:11 / Isa. 63 / Isa. 24 / Dan. 7 / Matt. 25:31 / Rev. 5. Personal salvation - Isa. 38 / Isa. 1:18 / Acts 16:30,31. Political salvation – Exo. 14:13,14 / Dan. 2:44,45 / Luke 1:70-75 / 2Thess. 1:6-9 / Rev. 12:10, Rev. 19. / 1Pet. 1:9, 13, 21}