

Dispensations:

The Key to Rightly Dividing God's Word

Salvation Through the Dispensations

Before we continue to the next dispensation, the Tribulation, it is important to have a clear understanding of salvation through the dispensations we have seen so far. This will greatly assist us in rightly dividing and understanding how salvation works **AFTER** the Church Age dispensation of grace has concluded.

KEY QUESTION: How does one get saved at any point in time? By **doing whatever God says to do!**

"SALVATION" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

It is important to note that while we look at "salvation" in the Old Testament, not 1 person during that period was technically "saved" until Christ died on the cross...which ushered in the New Testament. (like credit -forgive now, pay later) It was His shed blood that would ultimately pay the price for sin for EVERYONE throughout all of time. As we examine the Old Testament, and the dispensations within that time, salvation can generally be broken down into 2 sections:

1. Before the Law: Conscience

- Adam & Eve
 - Before the fall: innocent, not sinners but not yet righteous either. One command: don't eat from the tree of knowledge. **Choice**: obey and remain innocent or disobey and die! Prove you love God and you will earn eternal life (tree of life). **Faith plus works** (Edenic covenant - Gen. 1-2). **Faith was not belief in God but in what God said! Note the difference vs today's faith. Note God's grace in not physically killing them – He could have!**
 - After the fall: sin brought guilt, shame, and fear (conscience). They try to cover it up by their own works, but God shows them that is not sufficient. God is willing to offer mankind a covering for his sin, but it requires a **blood** sacrifice of an animal, at least until that promised "seed" crushes sin – Gen. 3:7-21. Mankind now has experienced good and evil and has his conscience to help him discern right (God) from wrong (anything contrary to God). **Faith (in what God said) and works.**
- Cain & Abel
 - Abel: faith plus works (acceptable sacrifice) – Gen. 4:4. (He knew from his parents 3:21)
 - Cain: faith plus wrong works = SIN! – Gen. 4:3, 5-7; **Heb. 11:4** (note Abel's righteousness, not God's); **1 John 3:12**. Not mentioned what happened to him, but being of the wicked one says it all! Not in line of Adam in Gen 5 – cut off from his people! NOTE: He had a chance to do what God said and be right with Him!!! **Faith (in what God said) and works.**
- Noah
 - Noah and his family were under everything we have seen so far plus one additional command that God gives to him – build an ark – Gen. 6-7! Note it was not his faith that saved him but his work of building that ark - If he didn't, he would drown – **Heb. 11:7!** **Faith (in what God said) and works.**
- Abraham
 - Abraham is unique in that he is the first person to be saved solely by **faith** – **Gen. 15:6**; Rom. 4:3.

- Note that he had to have the right faith in order to receive God's righteousness (Gen. 12-14; [Heb. 11:8-9](#)). His initial acts of obedience by faith were good, but he does not get saved until he believes in God's promise of a son, Isaac who will be the first of a seed that will be as many as the stars – Gen. 15:6.
- He did not have to complete a work to be saved, but his faith was tested – Gen. 22:1-12; James 2:21-23. [God tells him to sacrifice Isaac. Showed he was willing but God stopped him. He proved his faith but did not have to complete the work.](#)
- Paul compares this unique type of faith to ours today – [Rom. 4:23-24](#) but key differences must be noted:
 - Abraham was not born again or regenerated.
 - He did not receive the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
 - He was not placed in Christ (in the body of Christ). [Kingdom of God still lost](#)
 - He was not justified OF HIS SIN as Christ had not yet died to redeem him.
 - When he died, he went to a place named after him where OT saints would dwell until Christ redeems them after His crucifixion – Abraham's bosom.
 - Abraham's faith was in the unique promise God made to him, ours is in Jesus Christ.

Before the law, a person was saved by God's grace IF his works **proved** his faith (obedience to what God said). [Faith that God existed was not enough. Faith in what God said was not enough.](#) A person had to ACT in obedience to what God had revealed to him to be saved. He learns an animal sacrifice is an acceptable covering for his sin, but obedience was still required. Abraham is the notable exception as a type or picture of the faith future believers will have in the Son of God, born of that promised seed of Abraham!

2. During the Law

- The Mosaic covenant and dispensation of the law were basically a set of commandments, rules, statutes, regulations, blessings and curses, laws, and memorials designed to show man his sin nature and that he can in no way meet God's standards of his own accord. (Obedience= blessing. Disobedience=curse) [Remember conditional covenant REQUIRING obedience. Israel agreed to it in Ex. 19:8.](#)
 - Punishment for failure was to be "cut off" from the people and often **death** – Ex. 21:12-22:19, 31:14-15, 30:33, Lev. 7:20-27, 17:14, 19:20, 20:9-18, 24:16-21.
 - The offering of animals is detailed and remains an acceptable sacrifice, however habitual sin was not tolerated with violators being put to death – Numbers 15. ([sins of ignorance, forgiven by sacrifice. Deliberate, death. One man was put to death for gathering sticks on the Sabbath!](#)) **Verse 31** – if you died with your iniquity on you, cut off, you went to hell...
 - [Ezekiel written while Israel in Babylonian captivity. One main purpose of the book is to expose the sin of Israel. They have already been judged, lost the kingdom, and are slaves. He reminds them of the price for sinning against God.](#) Your salvation was based upon your **works** - [Eze. 18:20-27, 33:11-20!](#) In our current church age, we have God's righteousness – Matt. 6:33; Rom. 3:25.
 - Israel in the wilderness pressure Aaron into making a golden calf claiming it as the god of Israel and even making an altar for it – Ex. 32:1-6. God plans to wipe them **all** out but Moses convinces Him to have mercy. They are given a choice, some repent while about 3,000 are killed (32:20-28) and God clearly states that those who sinned will be blotted out of His book.

During the law, a person was saved through faith **AND primarily works**. He had to obey the law and if he broke it, had to repent each time, offer a sacrifice. and then be obedient. If one was lacking in any of these, he would die in his sins and go to Hell.

NOTE: Nowhere in the OT can you find the Holy Spirit regenerating anyone or sealing anyone until the day of redemption or placing them "in Christ". OT saints did not look "forward to the cross", they knew little to nothing about it. Sure, they knew there would be a redemption but what they really looked forward to was the Kingdom of **Heaven!** Not even the disciples were looking forward to the cross (Matt. 16:21-22 [Peter's rebuke to Jesus](#))! OT believers did not go to Heaven when they died but into Abraham's bosom...until Christ led captivity captive! Grace, however, can also be seen abounding in these OT dispensations. Even during the law, God's desire is for everyone to be obedient and saved!

SALVATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The doctrine of New Testament, Church Age salvation:

- **Justification:** God declares you righteous and just (justified from all sin) - Rom. 3:24, 5:1, 8:30.
- **Redemption:** Your repurchase made by God to deliver you from the bondage of your sin – 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Rom. 3:24. [The vehicle of our justification Rom 3:24](#)
- **Propitiation:** The payment, price for sin made by Christ sacrificing Himself to satisfy the demands of a holy God – 1 John 2:2, 4:10; Rom. 3:25. Christ is our propitiation.
- **Remission:** The application of the payment made by Christ to you for your sin (forgiveness, pardon) – Matt. 26:28; Rom. 3:25.
- **Atonement:** The purging of sin by Christ's death on the cross (the act of reparation or payment) – Rom. 5:11; Mark 15:33-38; Matt. 27:33-51.
- **Imputation:** God charges (imputes, attributes) my sin to Christ and then charges Christ's righteousness to me – Rom. 5:13, 4:6,8.
- **Regeneration:** Our new birth by the grace of God. The act of the Holy Spirit taking up residence in the believer at salvation, sealing him, and making him a new creature – Titus 3:5; Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Cor. 6:17-19; 2 Cor. 5:17.
- **Reconciliation:** The sinner and the most holy God are brought together (reconciled) in peace through Christ's death on the cross- Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18; Col. 1:20-22.
- **Spiritual circumcision:** At salvation God separated your sinful flesh from your soul so His Holy Spirit could take up residence within you – Col. 2:11; Rom. 2:29; Phil. 3:3.
- **Adoption:** Adopted into God's family, a son of God, and joint heirs with Christ - Rom. 8:14-19; 1 John 3:1-10. There will be a second adoption is when you receive your glorified body at the rapture of the Church - Rom. 8:23.
- **Sanctification:** Set apart from the world for the work of God, commissioned with the ministry of reconciliation (set free from the flesh, yielding to Holy Spirit) - 1 Cor. 1:30, 6:11; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; Rom. 15:16; 1 Thess. 4:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:21.
- **Glorification:** Glory and honor from the Lord as a result of being justified and sanctified (present) – Rom. 8:17, 30. The day we are glorified with Christ (future) - Rom. 8:18; 1 Cor. 15:41-51; 1 John 3:1-2.

The Bible makes it clear that Old Testament salvation and New Testament salvation are **different!**

SALVATION IN THE TRIBULATION

Similar to the dispensation of the law, salvation in the tribulation will be based on faith and primarily works. What you do or don't do will have an impact on your salvation. Those alive who cross over from the Church Age to the Tribulation will NOT find God's grace and mercy the way it was. ([more next week](#))

KEY POINTS

In summary, we have seen 4 key things:

1. Though there are some common elements, the means of salvation is **NOT** the same in every dispensation.
2. Not every person who was saved was "**born again**".
3. It WAS POSSIBLE for someone to **lose** their salvation and will be again...but **NOT** in this current church age.
4. A person is saved simply by doing whatever God says. Sometimes it is by works, sometimes by faith, and sometimes by faith and works.