

A detailed still life painting depicting an autumn harvest. The scene is set on a wooden surface, possibly a table or shelf. In the upper right, a large bunch of white garlic is prominently displayed, surrounded by various autumn leaves in shades of orange, yellow, and brown. To the right of the garlic, there are several small, round, orange-brown fruits, possibly persimmons or small apples. In the center, a large, ripe red apple sits on a wooden surface, surrounded by more autumn leaves. To the left of the red apple, a small, ornate glass bowl filled with water and floating leaves is visible. In the foreground, a green apple sits on the wooden surface, surrounded by a variety of nuts, including walnuts and hazelnuts, and more autumn leaves. To the right of the green apple, a woven basket is tipped over, spilling out a large quantity of small, round, orange-brown fruits, similar to the ones in the upper right. The overall composition is rich and detailed, with a warm, autumnal color palette. The word "Light" is written in a large, white, serif font across the top left, and "...on a New World" is written in a smaller, white, serif font across the bottom right.

Light

...on a New World

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Cover picture: Window display of autumn harvest foods

*Note: All Bible quotations are taken from the New King James Version
except where another version is indicated after the text.*

Religious Groups in Bible Times

The Samaritans

SAMARITANS today insist that they are the direct descendants of the Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who survived the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 721 BC. The independent records of Sargon 2nd king of Assyria record that he deported 27,290 people following the fall of the northern kingdom.

There is only one reference to the Samaritans in the Old Testament Scriptures. This refers to the religion of the people who the king of Assyria transported to the northern kingdom of Israel to replace the exiled native population. We read in the second book of Kings: *'However every nation continued to make gods of its own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made'* [2 Kings 17.29].

There are a number of references to Samaritans in the New Testament as a distinct group in northern Israel at the time of Christ, but these may have no connection to those referred to as Samaritans in the Old Testament

SAMARITAN IDENTIFICATION

In November 2007 there were 712 Samaritans in Israel, divided into 4 families, Cohen, Tsedekah, Danfi and Marhib. They live mostly in Kiryat Luza on Mount Gerizim near the city of Nablus (Shechem) in the Palestinian area known today as the West Bank, and in the city of

Holon, just outside Tel Aviv. Ethnically they are descended from a group of Israelite inhabitants that have connections with ancient Samaria from the beginning of the Babylonian exile (586 BC) up to the Christian era. The Samaritans however derive their name, not from this geographical designation, but rather from the term ‘**Shamerim**’ which means keepers or observers of the law.



Samaritans on Mount Gerizim

Religiously, they are the adherents to Samaritanism, a religion based on the Law of Moses (the Torah) claiming that their worship, as opposed to mainstream Judaism, is the true religion of the ancient Israelites, pre-dating the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

There is a strong feeling that the New Testament Samaritans are a totally different group, with no evidence that they inhabited Samaria alone. Rather the references in the Books of the Maccabees and by the historian Josephus indicate a different group sometimes called Shechemites. The New Testament record would also suggest no direct connection with Assyria alone.

The Samaritans never deny that the Assyrians assimilated with them, but they claim that other nations have assimilated into Judaism as well. The Assyrian exile was a long process and took many years with relatively few coming to the region and integrating with the local

people. So to the Samaritans there is a clear distinction between their own ancestors and the inhabitants of Samaria. Another compelling argument is that there is no suggestion of pagan religious practice attaching to the New Testament Samaritans, who were quite the opposite and therefore do not fit the description indicated by the record in the Second Book of Kings.

The Samaritans only regard the first five books of the Old Testament known as the Pentateuch as Scripture. They believe that God is a unity and regard Moses as a prophet, making the Law given by God through him very important.

They also have some historical books of their own, recognising that there will be a day of judgement and that Mount Gerizim should in their opinion be the appointed place by God for sacrifice. Additionally they believe that Moses as **‘Taheb’** the restorer or **‘returning one’**, will come again.

We can see from their religious beliefs that there were strong connections with the Jewish faith. The New Testament references to these people are always favourable but we notice that they were despised by the native Jews.

Scholars tell us that we should not be looking for the origins of the New Testament Samaritans as a distinctive group until the end of the 4th century BC, when Shechem was rebuilt after a long period of desolation. The enemies of the Jewish community in the earlier Persian period of influence mentioned by Ezra and Nehemiah would then be some of the inhabitants of Northern Israel whose opposition to the rebuilding of Jerusalem was mainly stirred by political motives. (see for example Ezra chapter 4.1-10 and Nehemiah chapter 4.1-8)

Clearly these people grouped as Samaritans were mixed race newcomers, who had been assimilated into the nation due to location and marriage. One suggestion is that they were originally a group of religious purists, who after the conquests of Alexander the Great

decided to make a fresh start where they could practice their religion, and a temple was built on Mount Gerizim.

JESUS MEETS A SAMARITAN WOMAN

There is an interesting insight into the Samaritans in the Gospel of John. Jesus travelled from Judea in the south of Israel to Galilee in the north and needed to pass through the region of Samaria. Being tired and thirsty he asked a woman for a drink of water from Jacob's well. The Jews thought that all Samaritans were unclean and therefore would have nothing to do with them, which left the Samaritan woman rather puzzled. She said: *'How is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink of me, a Samaritan woman'* [John 4.9].



In the ensuing conversation, Jesus reminded her that she had had five husbands and was living with a man who she was not married to, she realised he was a special person and said to him: *'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet'* [John 4.19]. The woman recognised that a Messiah was to come and Jesus confirmed that he was the one [John 4. 25, 26].

It is also interesting to note that the Samaritans identify Mount Gerizim, not Jerusalem, as the place chosen by God to establish His name based on the words of Moses [Deuteronomy 11. 29].

You can imagine the surprise of Jesus' disciples when they returned to see him talking to her. Her immediate response was to tell people in the town all about Jesus and they came out to see for themselves. Not only did they come to see for themselves but having heard what Jesus had to say, we read that they believed that the promised Messiah was in

fact Jesus the Son of God, who was speaking to them [*John 4.39-41*].

This is an interesting account of non-Jews being convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, when the religious leaders of the Jews and many of the people refused to believe this even after they had seen miracles performed.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

The Gospel of Luke records an interesting parable in which Jesus demonstrated the meaning of neighbourliness. Jesus focused the lesson of the parable on the person who was to help the traveller – the one who had been attacked and robbed on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. A Priest and a Levite passed by on the other side to avoid the issue rather than help the injured man. The point was made very powerfully, showing the Samaritan as the good neighbour, when they were despised even by the religious leaders of the day [*Luke 10.30-37*].

Jesus told this parable in answer to a question by an expert in the teaching of The Law of Moses. This man asked Jesus '*Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*' The answer of Jesus confirmed the teaching of the Law of Moses but more importantly it teaches us a very important lesson about our priorities in life – God first, our neighbour second and self last:

'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with your strength, and with all your
mind, and your neighbour as yourself' [*Luke 10.25-27*].

In John chapter 8 we find Jesus in conflict with the religious leaders. His condemnation of them resulted in a harsh response to Jesus. This was an attempt to insult him by suggesting that he was a Samaritan and was demon-possessed [*John 8.48*]. They knew this was untrue but it was a cheap jibe to throw at him, in order to suggest that he was a false teacher. It was probably an indication of their frustration or desperation in falling back on such tactics. It also highlights the lack of social standing the Samaritans had in the eyes of many Jews.



The good Samaritan (see page 5)

THE GOSPEL FOR EVERYONE

Jesus instructed his disciples not to preach to the Gentiles or Samaritans [*Matthew 10.5*]. This is perhaps strange at first sight because that was the opposite to what Jesus did at Jacob's well when he met the Samaritan woman. Jesus then gave the instruction to preach the gospel first to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' [*Matthew 10.6*].

After the resurrection a great change took place with the Gentiles and Samaritans being very much included in the preaching of the apostles. The last recorded words of Jesus to the apostles, instructed them to be witnesses of Jesus 'in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' [*Acts 1.8*]. Later we find that Philip, Peter and John specifically went to Samaria to preach to the Samaritans about Christ [*Acts 8.4-25*].

It was not always the case that the Samaritans were ready to accept the Gospel message, but in fact were sometimes hostile towards Jews particularly if they were heading for Jerusalem to worship, because the Samaritans were despised by the Jews for worshipping on Mount Gerizim rather than in Jerusalem. Jews on their way to Jerusalem often skirted around Samaria when travelling from the north to the south,

even crossing the River Jordan to go down on the east side of the river.

The Gospel message is extended to anyone who wishes to listen in any nation of the world as Paul and Barnabas told the Jews in Antioch:

‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles’ [Acts 13. 46].

The Apostle Peter reminds us that *‘The Lord is not slack concerning his promise...but is long-suffering towards us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance’* [2 Peter 3. 9].

THE SAMARITAN LEPER

There is good and bad in every nation as demonstrated in the account of the healing of ten lepers recorded in the Gospel of Luke. They were cured of this wasting disease so no doubt they were all very thankful that Jesus had responded to their pleas to be made whole. However, only one of them came back to show his appreciation. We read that he *‘fell down on his face at his (Jesus) feet, giving him thanks. And he was a Samaritan’* [Luke 17.16].

LESSONS FOR US

So what can we learn from these references to the Samaritans? Firstly, they were a mixed race people accepting and fearing God in their own way based on the teaching of the first five books of the Bible, and expecting a ‘Messiah’ or ‘Restorer’ to return to the earth, who they thought would be Moses. Secondly, they were marked out and despised by the Jews because of their mixed race origins – a mixture of Assyrians, Greeks and others who settled in the land of Israel and mingled with the Jewish population.

Although they were despised by the majority of Jews, they too could benefit from the sacrifice of Jesus as indicated in the parable of

the good Samaritan and the cure of the Samaritan leper's condition. Leprosy was symbolic of sin and its consequences and maybe he understood the significance of his cleansing and was truly thankful for the healing power of Jesus.

The Samaritan woman who Jesus talked to and her friends from town were blessed to receive the Gospel and respond to it. The Samaritans who heard and responded to the message of the Gospel, recognised that salvation is of the Jews, as Jesus told the Samaritan woman by the well: *'You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews'* [John 4.22].

Through the work of Jesus, Gentiles (that is non-Jews) including Samaritans can become associated with God's promises to his chosen people and obtain salvation. In Paul's letter to the Romans chapter 11 he goes to great lengths to explain how non-Jews can benefit from the Jewish hope along with them and it is well worth reading this chapter particularly from verse 11 through to the end of the chapter.

For believers it doesn't matter of what ethnic origin you are, or what position you have in life, for total equality is achieved by becoming related to the promises of God through baptism into Christ. Paul expressed it so clearly in his letter to the Galatians:

'For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise' [Galatians 3: 27-29].

Will you be among those who inherit the promise?

John Carpenter
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Bible Teaching About...

The Cross of Christ

THE expression ‘**the Cross of Christ**’ is used in two senses in the Bible. Firstly it is the means by which Jesus was crucified and put to death and secondly, by extension, it stands for the principles of his sacrifice. It is our contention that in both these senses mainstream Christianity has lost sight of the original teaching of the Bible.

THE SHAPE OF THE CROSS



It may come as a surprise that there is no Biblical evidence that the ‘cross’ of Jesus was actually cross shaped. The word used to describe the cross in the Greek manuscripts is ‘*stauros*’ a word which simply means stake or upright post. The description of crucifixion we are given in the New Testament is of Jesus being nailed to a stake after the manner of this illustration in the 17th century woodcut by Justus Lipsius.

The first suggestion that the stake of Jesus was something like the traditional cross shape is found in the Epistle of Barnabas’ [9.7]. The book is not part of the Canon of Scripture and is thought to have been written in the 2nd century AD. Here there is a mystical reference

to the cross being in the form of the letter ‘T’.

A standard reference book has the following entry:

‘STAUROS’ *an upright pale or stake . . . to be distinguished from the ecclesiastical form of a two beamed cross. The shape of the latter had its origin in ancient Chaldea, and was used as a symbol of the god Tammuz (being the shape of the mystic Tau, the initial of his name) in that country and in adjacent lands, including Egypt. By the middle of the third century A.D., the churches had either departed from, or had travestied, certain doctrines of the Christian faith. In order to increase the prestige of the apostate ecclesiastical system pagans were received into the churches apart from regeneration by faith, and were permitted largely to retain their pagan signs and symbols. Hence the Tau or T...with cross piece lowered was adopted to stand for the “cross” of Christ’ [Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words – One-Volume edition: NT P.138].*

The idea that the cross was something other than an upright stake is we believe significant because it led to a departure or ‘falling away’ from the original teaching of the 1st Century apostles. This ‘falling away’ is something that the apostles had often warned about [Acts 20.29; 2Thessalonians 2.3; 1Timothy 4.1; 2Peter 2.1; Jude 4]

DOES THE SHAPE OF THE CROSS MATTER?

From the quotation above it can be seen that the emphasis on the shape of the cross was part of the ‘falling away’ from the truth of the gospel as originally taught by the apostles. In time there arose a veneration for the cross itself. This was a form of devotion that was directly taken from the practices of paganism in the ancient world and is not found anywhere in the New Testament.

Crosses were a central part of the Easter festival in ancient Babylon.

Eventually the Easter festival became 'Christianised' as an annual event imported into the rapidly growing religion of Christianity. There is, incidentally, no suggestion in the Bible that commemorating the death of Christ should be an annual festival. The practise of the early church was to remember the death of Jesus in bread and wine on the first day of each week.

The symbol of the cross is seen in the picture of Shamshi-Adad V who sports a cross as one of the pendants around his neck. By the end of the fourth century AD 'signing' oneself with the sign of the cross became common practice. This sprang directly from the worship of the god Tammuz whose sign it was.



The pagan practice of '*weeping for Tammuz*' is spoken of in the Old Testament [*Ezekiel 8.14*]. Tammuz was a fertility god of ancient Babylon. He was the god of vegetation and flood. In summer it was believed that he died and went to the underworld. The death of Tammuz was lamented at the pagan festival of Easter.

ORIGINAL TEACHING ABOUT THE CROSS

If the concept of the shape of the cross was all that had altered then it would only be a matter of historical curiosity but this was not all that changed. Along with the introduction of pagan forms came first a change of emphasis about the teaching of the cross and ultimately a change of doctrine.

In brief the first principles of Bible teaching about the sacrifice of Jesus and the way it can save us are as follows:

- * Jesus came to save his people from their sins [*Matthew 1.21; 1 Timothy 1:15*].
- * To do this Jesus had to overcome the law of sin and death (man dies because of sin) [*Romans 5.12; Ezekiel 18:20*].
- * Jesus did not commit any sin [*Hebrews 4.15*] but he died because he shared our mortal ‘sin’ nature [*2 Corinthians 5.21*].
- * In this way Jesus overcame the law of sin and death [*Acts 2.24*]
- * The question remains – How can man be set free from death without God’s law being broken?
- * God is just [*Exodus 34.6,7*].
- * In Jesus’ death there was a way provided of maintaining God’s justice (righteousness) and allowing mortal men and women to escape the law of sin and death [*Romans 3.25,26*].
- * Through belief and baptism into Christ Jesus, his victory over death can be shared by us [*1 Corinthians 15.21-23*].

ORIGINAL TEACHING CHANGED

The changes that swept through the Church in the second and third centuries AD, included the introduction of the idea that Jesus had an existence before his birth of the virgin Mary (so called pre-existence) and eventually the idea that Jesus was God (the doctrine of the trinity). Neither of these ideas is to be found in the inspired Scriptures and the acceptance of them required fundamental changes in the way that the principles of Christ’s sacrifice were viewed.

For example if Jesus was God, who is spirit [John 4.24], how could he overcome sin *in the flesh*? Problems such as this gave rise to the notion that Jesus actually had two natures, again an idea that goes directly against the original teaching of the gospel. The truth is that Jesus was born with human nature and this was changed to divine nature after his resurrection.

THE SUBSTITUTION THEORY

Another idea to arise was that Jesus' death was **a substitutionary sacrifice**. The theory of substitution in relation to the cross of Christ implies that we are saved because Jesus has taken our place. This is like a man awaiting death at the gallows having someone volunteer to die instead of him. But Jesus did not die as our substitute because:

- * Believers still die: They should not die if Christ's death paid the sinners debt in full.
- * God's justice (righteousness) was declared in Jesus' death [Romans 3.25,26], and substitution is not just. God's justice dictates that every man should die for his own sin [Deuteronomy 24.16].
- * The principle of substitution was specifically forbidden in The Law of Moses [Exodus 32.32,33]. Jesus fulfilled 'The Law' in his death [Matthew 5.17].
- * Jesus should not have been raised if he was our substitute. Sin brings death – the debt to sin is paid by death [Romans 6.7]. But if Christ was not raised we should not be saved: '*And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!*' [1Corinthians 15.17].

A REPRESENTATIVE SACRIFICE

Far from being a substitute, the Bible reveals Jesus' death as **a representative sacrifice**. He was a man of Adam's nature like those he

came to save. In his death as in his life he left an example for his disciples to follow:

‘For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps: Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to him who judges righteously’ [*1Peter 2:21-23*].

During his life, Jesus resisted the promptings of his fleshly nature and when he died he put it to death. His disciples are called on to do the same [*Romans 8.13; Colossians 3.5*]. This means that to the best of one’s ability the natural impulses of our human nature must be resisted. In doing this we will fail but Jesus as our high priest is sympathetic because he knows the strength of human nature:

‘Therefore, in all things he had to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to aid those that are tempted.’

[*Hebrews 2.17*]

BEARING THE CROSS

Jesus has overcome sin by his death on the cross. We can be saved by his death if we identify with it in baptism [*Romans 6.4-6*] but for those who would be saved there is still a work for them to do - a battle to be fought and a victory to be won. We are required to put to death our human nature. This is the meaning of the words of Jesus when he said: ‘*If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*’ [*Matthew 16.24; see also Mark 8.34; Luke 9.23*].

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From our Mail Bag

THIS question came from a reader in Wales who asks why we insist on baptism being total immersion in water, whereas other churches content themselves with sprinkling water, often on the head of a baby or very young child.

Firstly, we base all our doctrines on the Bible and endeavour to follow the example of the first century apostles who had the task of spreading the Gospel message, the good news about God's plans for His coming Kingdom. So the starting point is to examine the purpose of baptism as a necessary act, in relation to the Gospel of the coming Kingdom of God.

The Apostle Peter was preaching in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and he reminded his hearers that Jesus had been crucified at the request of the people. When they accepted what he had said, some of those present needed an answer to the question '*what shall we do?*', to which he replied '**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**' [Acts 2.38]. Peter's words clearly tell us that baptism is related to **repentance** and **remission of sins**.

After his conversion on the road to Damascus, the Apostle Paul was commanded to demonstrate his **repentance** in these words: '*be baptized and wash away your sins*' [Acts 22.16]. Paul reminds us of the significance of the act of baptism, in his letter to the Christians at Rome: '*Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death,*

that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life' [Romans 6. 4].

When we add this all together, we understand that baptism is firstly a symbolic washing away of past sins and secondly an act that represents acknowledgement of the part played by Jesus through his death and resurrection. The individual undergoes a symbolic burial and is raised to start a new life having had past sins covered over and taken away.

It does not require a very in-depth analysis of these Scriptures by us to realise that infant sprinkling of a child unable to understand what is being done or why, cannot constitute acceptable baptism. This is also endorsed by Paul when writing to the believers in Galatia: *'For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ...And if you are Christ's, then you are **Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise**' [Galatians 3. 27-29].* In Paul's words, there is a connection between baptism and the promises given to Abraham the father of the Jewish race. This underlines the need to understand the full impact of such action before undergoing baptism.

If you refer to a concordance you will find that many times the Bible passages tell us that the gospel was preached, so that the individual could understand, believe and then be baptised. For example, consider the incident involving the Philippian jailer who asked: *'What must I do to be saved?'*. The answer was: *'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.'* The result? *'And immediately he and all his family were baptized' [Acts 16.30-33].*

It is also worth exploring the meaning and use of the Greek word '*baptiso*' in the Bible. The word literally means to dip or to plunge in a liquid. It is a word which was used particularly in the dyeing trade, and describes the process of completely dipping a cloth or garment in the dye to change its colour. The implication here is to completely submerge the item and so dye the whole.

So what did believers do in New Testament times as a pattern of acceptable baptism for us? Consider the following examples:

An Ethiopian baptised by Philip: *'both...went down into the water'*. This happened after the man had listened to Philip speaking about Jesus and confirming that he believed with all his heart [Acts 8. 38,39].

John baptised in the river Jordan: The passage tells us that John was baptising in a place called Aenon *'because there was much water there'* [John 3.23].

Jesus was baptised by John: *'Then Jesus, when he had been baptized, came up immediately from the water'* [Matthew 3.16].

It does therefore become very clear that an intelligent understanding of God's offer of salvation through the life and death of Jesus is essential for salvation. Baptism was practiced as total immersion in water, to mark this new commitment by the individual. It was a symbolic act of burial and then coming up out of the water a symbolic resurrection to begin a new life in Christ.

The importance of a correct baptism cannot be underestimated as the Scriptures plainly show.

Correspondence Secretary

FREE BOOKLET

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Important Bible Words

Salvation

SALVATION in its simplest form, means the act of saving or being saved and is a word usually associated with Bible teaching, and rightly so for the word can be found throughout the Bible. It is used in the Old Testament one hundred and thirteen times and in the New Testament forty-three times. The Book of Psalms uses it most of all with sixty-one references.

What does the word salvation mean? If we analyse the word as it occurs in the Bible we find it has a number of different shades of meaning. It is not therefore necessarily a theological term but simply means being saved or preserved from something evil, whether physical or spiritual. On the theological side however it denotes firstly, the whole process by which men and women can be delivered from all that interferes with the enjoyment of God's highest blessings and secondly, the actual enjoyment of these blessings.

Salvation is closely connected with the word saviour, another word found in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament the word saviour is especially used of God as the Deliverer of His chosen people Israel. In the New Testament, the word saviour also means a preserver or deliverer and is usually applied to Jesus as we read in the words of the angel addressed to Joseph:

‘And she (Mary) will bring forth a son, and you shall call his name JESUS (meaning saviour), for he will save his people from their sins’ [*Matthew 1.21*].

SALVATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Having established that the root meaning of the word salvation is deliverance from danger or evil, we need to consider some examples of how it is used in the Old Testament. The outstanding example of Divine salvation in the early history of God's people, the nation of Israel, was their deliverance from Egypt. There are some very relevant words in the book of Exodus, included in the song of Moses and the Israelites: *'The LORD is my strength and song, and he has become my **salvation**. He is my God and I will praise him'* [Exodus 15.2].

The meaning of salvation in this example can be understood by the words of Moses, as the children of Israel stood on the shore of the Red Sea fearful of the pursuing Egyptians. We read that *'Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the **salvation** of the LORD, which he will accomplish for you today'"* [Exodus 14.13].

Since it is God who provides the deliverance, He is described by the prophet Isaiah as the Saviour. *'For I am the LORD your God: the Holy One of Israel, your **Saviour*** [Isaiah 43.3]. When King David was delivered from all his enemies, his prayer of thanksgiving is expressed in similar terms: *The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; The God of my strength, in him I will trust, my shield and the horn of my **salvation** my stronghold and my refuge; my **Saviour**, you save me from violence* [2 Samuel 22.2, 3].

Another example of salvation can be seen from God's comforting words to the nation of Israel through the Prophet Jeremiah, when they were taken into exile in Babylon:

*'Therefore do not fear, O my servant Jacob, says the LORD. nor be dismayed O Israel, for behold, I will **save** you from afar and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you says the LORD to **save** you'* [Jeremiah 30.10].

The poor and the needy also come within the scope of God's salvation. David wrote in the Psalms: '*This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, and **saved** him out of all his troubles*' [Psalm 34.6]. Job expressed it like this: '*he **saves** the needy from the sword, from the mouth of the mighty, and from their hand* [Job 5.15]. In these verses, salvation applies not only to a nation as a whole, but to individuals and particularly to those who put their implicit trust in God. David, king of Israel was one such person who wrote:

'But the **salvation** of the righteous is from the LORD; he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them and deliver them; he shall deliver them from the wicked, and **save** them, because they trust in him.
[Psalm 37. 39, 40]

In the Old Testament we can see that complete trust in God was the most important human characteristic for salvation. Next in importance, and following naturally from the first was obedience to God's moral law as expressed in the written code called the Law of Moses. For those who did not keep that Law, forgiveness was conditional upon repentance. Most sins also required the sacrifice of an animal, which involved the shedding of blood, as part of the act of repentance and to obtain forgiveness of sins.

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

We are told in the letter to the Hebrews that the sacrifices under the Law of Moses were '*symbolic for the present time*' [Hebrews 9.9]. It was not until God's own Son Jesus Christ came that he, through obedience was able to present himself as the perfect sacrifice to take away sin. The passage in Hebrews continues with these important words which contrast the ritual sacrifices under the Law of Moses with the sacrifice of Christ:

'But Christ came as high priest of good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made

with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood he entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption [*Hebrews 9.11,12*].

The word salvation is mentioned only once by Jesus. The occasion was when Jesus met a tax collector called Zacchaeus - a man who belonged to a class that were hated by the people. Jesus listened to the man's confession of honesty and fairness above the call of duty and as a result Zacchaeus was immediately rewarded with the most satisfying words anyone could wish to hear. Jesus said to him: '*Today **salvation** has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham*' [*Luke 19.9*].

There is a principle set before us here. Zacchaeus was rewarded because his thoughts and actions were right. Jesus was the Saviour promised in the Old Testament and his mission was to save others like Zacchaeus, as we read for example in his words from Matthew's Gospel record:

'...the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost'
[*Matthew 18.11*].

'...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many [*Matthew 20.28*].

Jesus likened this saving process to a journey along a narrow and difficult road. He said:

'Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.'
[*Matthew 7.13, 14*]

Salvation calls for a contrite heart, a childlike receptiveness and the

forsaking of the things which will lead us away from that narrow path to salvation, conditions it is impossible for man unaided to fulfill. The disciples asked Jesus *'who then can be saved'*? Jesus answered them: *'The things which are impossible with men are possible with God'* [Luke 18.27]. However, God will only help us if we try our very best in our service to Him, and demonstrate in our lives, faith and belief in Him and His Son Jesus Christ.

THE GOSPEL RECORD OF JOHN

John's Gospel record has a lot to tell us about salvation, for each chapter suggests different aspects of the subject. In the following verses we are reminded of some of the ideas associated with the word salvation:

- * 'as many as received him to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name' [John 1.12].
- * 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God' [John 3.5].
- * 'He who believes in him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God' [John 3.18].
- * '...salvation is of the Jews' [John 4.22].

Christ's earthly parentage is clearly Jewish through his mother Mary. His direct line can be traced back through the Old Testament Scriptures to King David and back further to Abraham, the Father of the Jewish race [Matthew 1.1]. It was to Abraham that God made this promise: *'And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'* [Genesis 12.3]. It was only when Jesus came that this promise to Abraham could be

fulfilled. The Apostle Paul shows how we too can be related to God's promise: *'If you are Christ's then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise'* [Galatians 3.29].

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Before Jesus left his apostles and ascended up to heaven he gave this commandment to them:

'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned'.

[Mark 16. 15,16]

In the Acts of the Apostles we read how the apostles preached the Gospel message of salvation. In the 2nd chapter of Acts we find Peter preaching in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and this was his urgent appeal: *'Be **saved** from this perverse generation'* [Acts 2.40].

The Apostle Paul preached the same message. He had been imprisoned at Philippi for proclaiming *'the way of **salvation**'* [Acts 16.17]. The record tells us that there was a great earthquake in the prison which opened the prison doors and loosed the chains of the prisoners. The prison keeper, fearing for his life, asked Paul and his companion Silas: *'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'* Their reply was this: *'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household'* [Acts 16.30, 31]. The following verses tell us that the prison keeper and his family were all baptized and rejoiced in their new found belief. There is only one way to obtain salvation and it is set out in the teaching of Jesus and his apostles.

If we return to Peter's preaching we find he has something very crucial to say about Jesus Christ and salvation. He said to the leaders of the Jews: *'Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved'* [Acts 4.12]. To resist the mission of Jesus Christ as preached by the apostles was to resist the only way of salvation. It is God's way for salvation comes from God, through Jesus. The plan of salvation and its execution

are ultimately of God. God has made compassionate and gracious provisions in sending Jesus. None of this can be known apart from the Holy Scriptures through which God speaks to us.

THE WRITINGS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

In his 2nd letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul leaves us in no doubt that the Scriptures are totally reliable and inspired words of God.

‘...from childhood you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work’ [2 Timothy 3.15-17].

Knowledge of the Scriptures has to be coupled with faith in Jesus. If we read and observe these precious words, it can be very rewarding now and give us hope of salvation from death and life for evermore.

JESUS – THE MEANS OF ETERNAL SALVATION

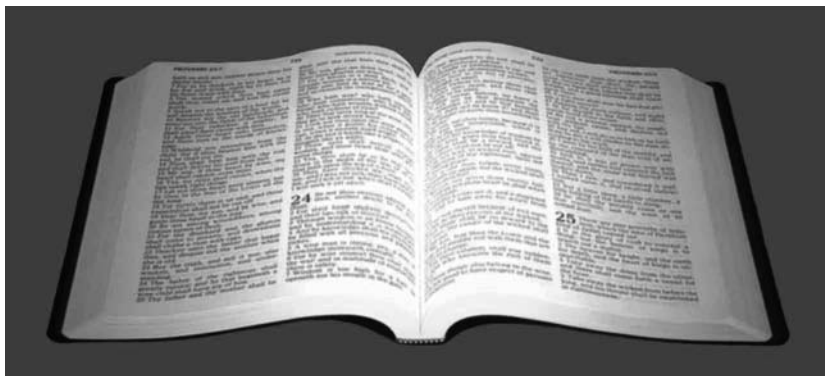
Jesus’ urgent appeal to those who would be true followers of his, was don’t be over concerned about the things of this life: *‘But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom’* [Luke 12.31, 32].

Finally, as Peter reminded those leaders of the Jews, it is only through Jesus that salvation has been made possible. Following Jesus is a commitment for life and salvation is conditional. The letter to the Hebrews sums up the vital role of Jesus and the conditions for obtaining eternal life in the kingdom of God.

‘...having been perfected, he became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him’ [Hebrews 5.9].

Julian Crisp
Norfolk, UK

FREE BIBLE COURSE



The Bible Correspondence Course is in two parts. The first part gives a basic outline of what the Bible contains and its message. The second part is a more detailed study of the important Bible teaching concerning God's plan of salvation and the Christian way of life. The course is free of charge and the first lesson can be obtained by writing to:

The Correspondence Secretary
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DARTFORD
DA1 9GT
England

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Marvellous are Your Works

GECKOS are small to medium sized nocturnal lizards found across all the southern continents, in southern Europe and northern Asia. The Tokay gecko (see below), one of the commonest, is between 30 and 40 centimeters long and weighs between 150 and 300 grams. They can live twenty or more years in captivity.



WALKING ON THE CEILING

If there is an animal that excites admiration, especially from small boys, it is one which can walk on the ceiling. One animal which does this with consummate ease is the gecko. Geckos seem to be able to cling to all types of surfaces, wet and dry, and at all orientations. A rough adobe wall, a lime-washed ceiling, or a glass window are all happy hunting grounds for the gecko as it searches for an insect meal.

So how do they perform their acrobatics?

Each of the gecko's feet consist of five more-or-less equally spread toes, under which are long pads with a number of 'V' shaped bands on them. The toe joints actually work in the opposite direction to ours, permitting the animal to 'peel' its feet off a surface. This in itself indicates just how strong a hold each toe has.

SPLIT ENDS

The secret of the grip is that each toe has about 100,000 tiny hairs on it, each of which is split at the ends into between one hundred and a thousand tiny fibres. Each of these tiny fibres has a widened and flattened end, but the end surface is set at an angle. When these flattened hair-ends lie on a surface at an angle of less than about 30 degrees to the horizontal they stick to it with enormous power. But why should many such tiny hair end-plates have this property of sticking to a surface anyway?

There is an attractive force between all objects called the Van de Vaal's force, but it only operates when the objects are extremely close. Most surfaces, because they are microscopically rough, only come close enough for this force to operate in a few tiny regions, often adding up to far less than 1% of the total available area. The toes of the gecko are very different. Because they and the hairs themselves are flexible, almost all of the hairs on the gecko's foot can touch any surface. This means that the areas in contact are relatively large, and the sticking power is equally strong, and it doesn't seem to be seriously affected by the surface being damp or oily.

But of course this has its downside. Something which sticks as strongly as this would, if not engineered carefully, be impossible to pull away. However, as the foot is drawn up, the hairs progressively adopt angles of over 90 degrees and they then easily become detached. Because the hairs are solid structures they are not damaged in this process and can be used repeatedly.

TECHNOLOGY BORROWS THE IDEA

This type of sticky surface has been copied by technologists, so far rather poorly it has to be admitted, but even their initial efforts have been remarkably successful. A square centimetre of ‘gecko tape’ has been attached to the hand of a ‘spiderman’ model, and the toy sticks quite happily to a glass ceiling or any other surface, provided that it is a relatively smooth one. When the technologists learn how to produce longer ‘hairs’ the way will be open to manufacture a range of ‘gecko sticky tapes’ which will not rely at all on conventional adhesives. They will stick to any surface, even skin, and will leave no residue behind them when pulled off. One rather curious property of these tapes is that they will have to be pulled off in one direction only, just like the gecko’s foot!

Looking at the hairs, as they are revealed by the scanning electron microscope, one is struck with wonder not just at the structures themselves but also at how the body of the gecko can produce them. Even more amazingly, if the gecko loses some, perhaps by trying to move too fast, it can grow more to replace them. Somehow I just cannot see that bit being copied by scientists.

But what a testimony to Creation! Geckos are vastly over-engineered according to Keller Autumn, a biologist at the Lewis & Clark College in Oregon, US. Apparently one gecko could resist a pull of some 130 kilograms. Evolutionary dogma insists that such structures came about because it was to the advantage of the animal in some circumstance. But what circumstance ever required a 300 gram Gecko to need the sticking power to hold well in excess of 100 kilograms against the pull of gravity? As a claim it is utter nonsense. The only rational explanation for the ability of the gecko to walk upside-down is that it was created by a super intelligence.

Laurie Broughton
North Devon, UK

The Christadelphians (Dawn Fellowship) believe the Bible (Old and New Testaments) to be the wholly inspired and infallible Word of God. Its principal theme is the salvation of mankind through the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ and the setting up of the kingdom of God under his rulership when he returns to the earth.

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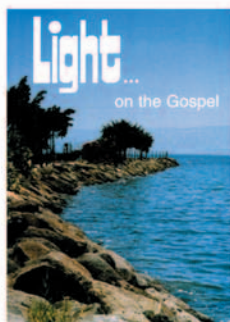
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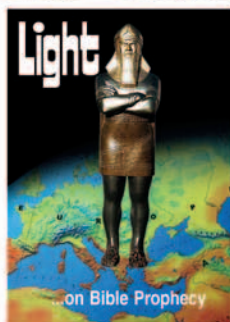
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