

## Issues Related to Salvation Down Through History

Salvation Before Moses	<b>The Saved: Those who belong to God</b>	<b>The Unsaved: Those who do <i>not</i> belong to God</b>
	All God-fearing people. This means that they love God and other people more than they love themselves. They accept <i>God's</i> revelation of who he is, as well as his definition of love. They also trust <i>God</i> for the ability to have this type of love, for this love goes contrary to our sinful human natures. [At this time, there was no Jew/non-Jew distinction (see below).]	Most of the people in the world, whether "religious" or "non-religious." This would include <i>everyone</i> who was unwilling to accept God on <i>his</i> terms. This would also include those who <i>claim</i> to love God, but who either (a) deny God's revelation of who he is, or who (b) don't <i>obey</i> him.

### God and the nations

By the time of Noah, almost everyone (except for a few in Noah's family) had turned away from God, and gone after "gods" of their own invention. After warning the people for 120 years (during which time they still refused to repent), God finally sent the Flood to judge the world. Nevertheless, after the Flood, people again went their own ways, rejecting God and his ways. Soon, all the nations of the world had again turned away from the true God. Very few people remained faithful to him.

### Abraham

God called Abraham to abandon all, and to follow him alone. God asked Abraham to trust him in a unique way. Because Abraham did so, God gave him a promise of special blessings. Some of these special blessings were intended for his *physical* offspring (the Jews). However, all who have the type of faith (trust) that Abraham had, are considered his *spiritual* offspring, and thus share in his spiritual (eternal) blessings.

### God and Israel

God revealed his Word to Israel, *not* because they deserved it (since they deserved it *no more* than anyone else), but because of the promise he made to Abraham, their forefather. (The majority of the Jews never did follow the true God, but continued in the ways of the other nations.)

### Moses and the Law

The Law was a special covenant (promise or agreement) that was made between Abraham's *physical* offspring and God, in partial fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. This Law contained moral principles that are applicable to all people everywhere, as well as special obligations (connected with special blessings) that were applicable only under that covenant. God gave them his very Word - along with the greater accountability that comes when people possess his Word. The nation was to be a light to the world, but failed to do so, because most of them continued to follow the false gods of other nations. (With their mouths, they claimed that they would follow the God of Abraham, but in their hearts, they continued to reject him.)

<b>Salvation After Moses</b>	<b>The Saved: Those who belong to God</b>		<b>The Unsaved: Those who do <i>not</i> belong to God</b>
	A small number of God-fearing Jews - those who truly loved and obeyed God. (The majority didn't.)	A few non-Jews who chose to follow the true God. These would have learned about the true God through contact with God-fearing <i>Jews</i> (who knew God's Word). Some of these non-Jews chose to become citizens of the Israelite community.	Most of the people in the world. This would include most of the Jews, because, though they practiced religious activities, they still had unchanged, unrepentant hearts.

**The Old Covenant**

The Old Covenant Law (given through Moses) revealed God's nature and will. It showed the contrast between God's holiness and our sinfulness. It provided a restraint for sin, and pointed to the need for God to provide a way for forgiveness and salvation. The Law was weak, in that it could not change a person's heart or remove his sinful nature. (People had to trust God *alone* for such a change - just as Abraham did, *before* the Old Covenant existed - and most were unwilling to do so.)

**Moses and the prophets**

They testified that God would one day provide a sacrifice that would fulfill the requirements of the Law. God also revealed that, because the Jewish nation was continually unfaithful to the covenant he made with them, he would one day replace that covenant with a *new* one.

**The New Covenant**

Jesus Christ fulfilled the requirements of the Old Covenant Law and brought to us the New Covenant. This New Covenant results in an *internal desire* to follow God's moral requirements, rather than an *external coercion* to do so - which was how the Law worked. It begins with God changing a person's *heart* (something that the Law could not do), and this change in heart results in a change in *conduct*.

**Jesus**

All the Law and the prophets point to the need for someone to tear down the sin barrier between us and God. This was accomplished by Jesus Christ, who fulfilled all the requirements of the Law on our behalf. Through him, we can enter the New Covenant (promise or agreement) - which not only removes the barrier between us and God, but also brings together Jews and non-Jews, as "one flock." Under this New Covenant, God's Word is proclaimed throughout the world - to both Jews and non-Jews.

<b>Salvation After Jesus' Resurrection</b>	<b>The Saved: Those who belong to God</b>		<b>The Unsaved: Those who do <i>not</i> belong to God</b>
	All God-fearing Jews became disciples of Jesus. (They accepted everything that the Law and the Prophets said about Jesus.)	All God-fearing non-Jews became disciples of Jesus. The number of God-fearing non-Jews increased, as the good news about Jesus began to be proclaimed to the nations.	Most of the people in the world. This would include most of the Jews, for though they were "religious," they did not truly follow Moses - they proved it by rejecting Jesus. [Today, these unsaved Jews would describe their religious activities as "Judaism."]
<b>Salvation Today</b>	<b>The Saved: Those who belong to God</b>		<b>The Unsaved: Those who do <i>not</i> belong to God</b>
	All God-fearing Jews are disciples of Jesus. [Some of them may call themselves "Christians"; others may prefer to be called "Messianic Jews."]	All God-fearing non-Jews are disciples of Jesus. [Most, if not all, would call themselves "Christians."]	<i>All</i> non-Christians. This would include all Jews who do not accept what the Law and the Prophets say about Jesus and the New Covenant. This would also include many (perhaps most) who call themselves "Christian." (Just like the Jews under the Old Covenant, most "Christians" under the New Covenant are merely religious, and have never really taken part in the New Covenant. The changes that the New Covenant brings have never occurred in them.)

### God and judgment

People will be judged based only on what knowledge they have of the truth. Though only some have God's Word in their possession, *all* have God's moral law embedded in their consciences (Romans 1:32, 2:14-15). Those who have been exposed to God's Word will be judged more severely (when they reject it), than those who only have God's law written on their consciences (which all people knowingly sin against). God's judgment will be totally righteous and fair.

### God and salvation

All people who have the ability to make conscious decisions have *willingly* chosen to do things that they know deserve a judgment of condemnation. Because this is willfully and consciously done, no one *deserves* salvation. If God chooses to save anyone (which he does), it is strictly an *undeserved* kindness (grace), an act of mercy on his part.

### Salvation and justice

Salvation does *not* nullify justice. The punishment for sin must still be paid - and that was done by Jesus. Though he was not guilty of any sin, he willingly chose to take upon himself the punishment for sin that *we* deserved.

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Jesus warned that *many* would have the opportunity to be saved, but *few* would actually be saved (Matthew 22:14). He warns us to make every effort to be sure that our salvation is genuine (Luke 13:24; also 2 Corinthians 13:5).

- Make sure you belong to God, and have not merely added "religion" to an unchanged, unrepentant heart. When it is too late, and you stand before God in judgment, you won't be able to change things.

God does not ask us to add "*religion*" to our lives, but to allow him to change our *nature* (which influences every aspect of life). This change occurs when we accept what God's Word says about us, and we let his Word influence our attitude and our conduct - all the while trusting God for the power to make that change. We must reject our old ways, as sinful and corrupt in God's sight, and replace them with a way of life that is holy and pure in God's sight - as defined in God's Word.

We ourselves do not have the will, nor the ability, to make that change. The best we can do, in our own strength, is a superficial imitation of the genuine change that God requires. We must swallow the pride of our own feeble attempts, and trust God for this change. Then God, with a kindness we don't deserve ("grace"), will give us the ability both to trust him, and to obey him.