## The Idea of Salvation

### А. Old Testament

**1. Terminology**

The Hebrew language expresses the idea of salvation with the verb root יָשַׁע (*yasha*). From it derives the name יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (*Yehoshua*), i.е., “Joshua.” During the Babylonian captivity, this name was abbreviated to the form יֵשׁוּעַ (*Yeshua*), i.е., “Jesus.” This corresponds to Gabriel’s message to Mary: “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matt 1:21).

The basic meaning of the verb יָשַׁע (*yasha*) is “to expand.”[[1]](#footnote-1) It describes movement from a crowded place to a spacious one, where people can enjoy more freedom of movement to accomplish their goals. Liefeld comments, “The root idea seems to be that of enlargement, providing space, or, conversely, removing that which restricts.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

The verb יָשַׁע (*yasha*) is used in the Old Testament two ways. Usually, it refers to deliverance from a physical enemy or physical danger (see Ex 14:30). At times, though, it relates to deliverance from sin.[[3]](#footnote-3) For example, in Ezekiel 36:29 we read, “I will save you from all your uncleanness,” and in Ezekiel 37:23, “I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them.”

A synonym to יָשַׁע (*yasha*) is נָצַל (*natsal*), which also carries a dual meaning of both physical and spiritual salvation. Regarding physical deliverance, we find נָצַל (*natsal*) is the following texts: “I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians,” (Ex 3:8), and, “The God of Hezekiah will not deliver His people from my hand” (2 Chr 32:17). In a spiritual sense, the psalmist employs נָצַל (*natsal*) in the following passages: “Deliver me from all my transgressions” (Ps 39:8), and, “…deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name's sake” (Ps 79:9).[[4]](#footnote-4) The basic sense of the term is “to pull out.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

A well-known Hebrew term, שָׁלוֹם (*shalom*), is often used as a greeting, but also relates to salvation. It carries a heavy sematic load that can be expressed by words like “peace,” “prosperity,” well-being,” “health,” and “security.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

Three Hebrew terms communicate the idea of “redemption”: גָאַל (*gaal*), פָדַה (*padah*), and כִּפֵר (*kipher*). The latter term literally means, “to cover,” and often is used for “propitiation” or “appeasement.”[[7]](#footnote-7) We find an example of this usage in Exodus 32:30, where Moses says to Israel, “I am going up to Yahweh, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

The term פָדַה (*padah*) applies to paying a fee to release property. The word גָאַל (*gaal*) is similar in meaning, but relates primarily to releasing that which belongs to a kinsperson.

Leviticus chapter 25 provides us an example of the usage of גָאַל (*gaal*). In verse 25, we read, “If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back (גָאַל) what his relative has sold.” In fact, the phrase “nearest kinsman” is derived from the verb גָאַל (*gaal*) as well and can be translated “redeemer.” So then, a near kinsman can serve as a redeemer. We find another example in Leviticus 25:47-48:

Now if the means of a stranger or of a sojourner with you becomes sufficient, and a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to him as to sell himself to a stranger who is sojourning with you, or to the descendants of a stranger's family, then he shall have redemption right (גָאַל) after he has been sold. One of his brothers may redeem him.

When the Old Testament speaks of “redemption,” it usually has Israel’s deliverance from Egypt in view. Murray concurs, “The redemption from Egypt occupies a central place; therefore, the import of OT redemption must be derived from this event.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

In contexts discussing the deliverance from Egypt, one encounters the term גָאַל (*gaal*): “You have by Your power redeemed (גָאַל) Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph” (Ps 77:15). Yahweh established a covenant with the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were His people, and He was their God. Therefore, God filled the place of their “near kinsman,” or “redeemer.”

The deliverance from Egypt is also denoted by the verb פָדַה (*padah*). Deuteronomy 15:15 is an example: “You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your God redeemed (פָדַה) you.” The Lord redeemed His people from bondage.

Murray provides this summary: “Redemption involved the securing of release or recovery by the payment of a price.”[[10]](#footnote-10) At the same time, he correctly notes that the use of גָאַל (*gaal*) and פָדַה (*padah*) do not always involve the payment of a price. For example, in Genesis 48:16, גָאַל (*gaal*) functions in the simple sense of “deliver.” The same is true for פָדַה (*padah*) in 1 Kings 1:29. In some texts, these terms are merely synonymous with “salvation”: גָאַל (*gaal*) in Psalm 107:2, Isaiah 43:1, Jeremiah 31:11, and Micah 4:10; פָדַה (*padah*) in Hosea 13:14.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Liefeld agrees that in many cases “there is little concern… with payment of ransom and even less with a payee. The focus is rather on the fact that divine action is needed to obtain freedom for God’s people.”[[12]](#footnote-12) However, it is important to keep in mind that in the overall Old Testament conception of redemption, the idea of liberation by paying a price is not totally absent (see Ex 15:16; Deut 32:6; Ps 73:2; Isa 43:3-4).

**2. Survey of Old Testament Teaching**

In the Old Testament, the goal of salvation, in general, is deliverance from physical enemies and physical danger. The most graphic example, as noted above, is God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Ex 7-14), during which the Lord did great miracles that Israel retained in its memory for its entire history. Liefeld comments, “The greatest demonstration of God’s salvation in the OT was the Exodus from Egypt.” It is mentioned in every section of the Old Testament: the Torah (Ex 20:1; Lev 26:13; Deut 6:21), the historical books (Judg 2:12; 6:8-9), the poetical books (Ps 106:9-10; 136:10-12), and the prophetic books (Mic 6:4; Amos 2:10).

As noted earlier, the term “redemption” is used to describe Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. It will be insightful here to compare Exodus chapters 3 and 6, where we encounter Yahweh’s first promise to deliver His people from Egypt. In Exodus 3:7-8, we read, “Yahweh said, ‘I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt…. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians.” Exodus 6:6, though, reads, “I am Yahweh, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem (גָאַל) you.”

The citation from chapter 6 contains a term for redemption, גָאַל (*gaal*), while the text from chapter 3 does not. This shows that, strictly speaking, God did not “redeem” His people, but “delivered” them. The idea of “redemption” is introduced later as a figure of speech. Clearly, “deliverance” is a more appropriate description, since Yahweh paid no price to “redeem” the sons of Jacob. He delivered them by means of mighty miracles. Therefore, we are to take the description in chapter 3, “I will deliver,” literally, but the reference in chapter 6, “I will redeem,” – figuratively. As we shall see, the insertion of “redemption” will serve as a symbol of a future redemption.

Although no redemption price was paid to liberate Israel from slavery, the event that led to their release was the Passover. During Passover, each family butchered a lamb and spread its blood on the doorframe of their house. On Passover night, God passed through the land of Egypt and struck every firstborn of the Egyptians. When He saw the blood on the houses of Israel, though, He passed by. After that event, Pharaoh released the people. The events that triggered Israel’s liberation, then, were the death of the firstborn in Egypt and the sacrifice of the lamb. Therefore, the price for the “figurative redemption” of Israel from Egypt was the death of the firstborn and the death of the lamb. In this way, Passover became the symbol for the future sacrifice of the Lamb of God, the Father’s Only Begotten Son.

The book of Judges narrates many examples of God’s saving work. Whenever Israel suffered because of straying from Yahweh and His covenant, He delivered them in His faithfulness: “Then Yahweh raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them” (Judg 2:16). Nehemiah reflects on this as well, “When they cried to You in the time of their distress, You heard from heaven, and according to Your great compassion You gave them deliverers who delivered them from the hand of their oppressors” (Neh 9:27).

Throughout Israel’s history, Yahweh was ready to intervene in the life of His people and save them when they called on Him. He was David’s savior from the hand of Saul (1 Sam 19ff), Hezekiah’s savior from the Assyrians, (2 Chr 32), the Jews’ savior from the hand of Haman (book of Esther), etc. In all these cases, deliverance was from a physical or political threat.

The Psalms speak much of God as Savior. The psalmist expresses his trust in the Lord his Deliverer: “He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken” (Ps 62:2); “God is to us a God of deliverances” (Ps 68:20); and, “Yahweh is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation” (Ps 118:14). He is confident that God will hear his prayer and answer: “I call upon Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies” (Ps 18:3); and, “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand will save me” (Ps 138:7).

The psalmist testifies that God saves out of troubles (Ps 34:6; 34:17; 54:8), death (Ps 56:13; 68:20), and Sheol (Ps 86:13). Salvation brings great joy (Ps 9:14; 13:5-6; 35:9).[[13]](#footnote-13) God’s salvation applies not only to His people in general, but to each individual as well.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The most impressive example of celebrating God’s salvation in the Psalms is found in Psalm 107. After describing various situations where people found themselves in danger, the psalmist repeats the refrain, “Then they cried out to Yahweh in their trouble; He delivered them out of their distresses” (Ps 107:6, 13, 19, 28). Whatever the problem might be, the Lord in ready to save.

Salvation is more than just an act of deliverance, but leads to a condition of well being, which is well described in Psalm 103:2-5: “Bless Yahweh, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; who satisfies your years with good things, {So that} your youth is renewed like the eagle.” God is not only the Savior of Israel, but also its Good Shepherd (Ps 28:9) and Keeper (Ps 121).[[15]](#footnote-15) Arnold affirms, “In addition to the notion of deliverance the Bible also uses salvation to denote health, well-being, and healing.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

We should also take note of the fact that according to Psalm 103:3, salvation in the Old Testament also has a spiritual dimension in that God provides forgiveness of sins: “Who pardons all your iniquities.” The same thought is expressed in Psalm 130:8: “He will redeem (גָאַל) Israel from all his iniquities.”

The prophetic books stress that salvation always comes from God. He is the only Savior of Israel. Isaiah 43:11 declares, “I, even I, am Yahweh, and there is no savior besides Me. (сf. Isa 12:2; 45:15, 21). Jeremiah echoes this same theme, “Surely in Yahweh our God Is the salvation of Israel” (Jer 3:23; сf. 20:13; 50:34). Hosea records, “There is no savior besides Me” (Hos 13:4; сf. 13:9-10). As Arnold states, “Despite the importance of human agency, salvation is attributed above all to God.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

Moreover, in the book of Isaiah God often speaks of Himself as the Redeemer of His people.[[18]](#footnote-18) Isaiah also contrasts God’s ability to save with the ineptitude of pagan gods. This was demonstrated in practice as well when Isaiah experienced deliverance from Assyria, who openly challenged the God of Israel (2 Kin 18:33-35).[[19]](#footnote-19)

The prophetic books relate salvation to temporal ills, for example, to deliverance from the threat of Babylon. Micah prophecies, “Dwell in the field, and go to Babylon. There you will be rescued; there Yahweh will redeem you from the hand of your enemies” (Mic 4:10; сf. Mic 2:13). Jeremiah predicts the same, “Their Redeemer is strong, Yahweh of hosts is His name. He will vigorously plead their case so that He may bring rest to the earth, but turmoil to the inhabitants of Babylon” (Jer 50:34; сf. 31:11).[[20]](#footnote-20)

In addition, the prophetic picture of salvation includes not only individual episodes of deliverance, but also an ongoing condition of peace and well-being. We read in Isaiah 26:1-3, “We have a strong city; He sets up walls and ramparts for security…. The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You.”

In addition, salvation sometime relates to spiritual deliverance, i.e., the forgiveness of sins, as in Isaiah 44:22: “I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.” Isaiah also writes, “A Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob” (Isa 59:20).[[21]](#footnote-21) Ezekiel adds, “I will save you from all your uncleanness” (Ezek 36:29), and, “I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them” (Ezek 37:23).

Another special feature of God’s salvation noted in the prophets is that Yahweh’s mercy extends beyond the borders of Israel to the whole world: “Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other” (Isa 45:22).

Finally, the Old Testament prophets at times link the Lord’s salvation with the coming of Messiah. Jeremiah writes, “I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land” (Jer 23:5). The messianic salvation promised in the Old Testament is, in essence, eschatological in nature.[[22]](#footnote-22)

We should also make note of various Old Testament metaphors symbolizing salvation, such as a cup (Ps 116:13), a horn (Ps 18:2), “a torch that is burning” (Isa 62:1), a spring (Isa 12:3), and a shield (2 Sam 22:36).[[23]](#footnote-23)

In summary, we affirm with White, who emphasizes the centrality of salvation in the Old Testament, “’The Lord is … my salvation’ is the heart of OT testimony, always with an overtone of undeserved mercy.”[[24]](#footnote-24) The most remarkable example and model of God’s salvation in the Old Testament is the Exodus from Egypt.

Although Old Testament salvation sometimes relates to spiritual themes and individual matters, Arnold correctly observes, “In general the Old Testament writers see salvation as a reality more physical than spiritual, more social than individual.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

In the Old Testament, salvation also has an eschatological aspect connected with the coming of Messiah. Still, Liefeld properly cautions, “God’s saving acts in the OT are not merely a foreshadowing of NT salvation; they have reality and validity in themselves.” Liefeld also acknowledges that God’s salvation is “not merely for the benefit of Israel,” but is also intended “that the ‘ends of the earth’ also know God’s salvation.”[[26]](#footnote-26)

### B. Intertestamental Period

In the intertestamental time, salvation was a timely topic for both Greeks and Jews. Greeks often sought salvation through the so-called “mystery religions,” as Liefeld records, “In the eyes of many inhabitants of the Greco-Roman world, the greatest promise of salvation was offered by the mystery religions.”[[27]](#footnote-27) They offered individuals liberation from futility and bliss in the afterlife: “Ultimately the devotees hoped for a better hereafter, in which the griefs and limitations of this present life would receive compensation.”[[28]](#footnote-28) The mystery religions included devotion to Isis and Osiris. According to legend, Osiris died and was raised to life by Isis. In Greek literature in general, the concept of salvation related to deliverance from sickness, troubles, and defeat in battle. Some Greek gods were regarded as “saviors,” such as Zeus.[[29]](#footnote-29)

In the Jewish apocryphal literature, God is the Savior from physical threats. The term “Savior” is primarily directed to Him. Unlike typical Jewish thought, in Qumran salvation was associated with righteousness. The teachings of Moses, Sadok, and the Teacher of Righteousness can lead to salvation. In the Qumran community, salvation was also understood eschatologically. The ultimate liberation of the righteous person was still future.[[30]](#footnote-30) First-century Judaism, though, laid stress on political deliverance from enemies and the restoration of God’s kingdom on earth under Messiah.[[31]](#footnote-31)

### C. New Testament

**1. Terminology**

The Greek term denoting salvation is σωτηρία (*soteria*).[[32]](#footnote-32) Its meaning is similar to the Hebrew יָשַׁע (*yasha*). It can indicate: (1) deliverance or protection from physical danger, (2) favorable external circumstances, (3) a healthy psychological condition, and even (4) victory over death. Because of the overlap between the words σωτηρία (*soteria*) and יָשַׁע (*yasha*), the Septuagint generally translated the latter with the former. Both could designate: (1) deliverance from danger, (2) a condition of peace and well-being resulting from that deliverance, and (3) protection from threats.

The noun σωτηρία (*soteria*) derives from the verbal form σῴξω (*sodzo*), which carries both a material and spiritual connotation. The following texts highlight the material aspect. When a storm struck on the Sea of Galilee, the disciples cried out to Jesus, “Save {us,} Lord; we are perishing!” (Matt 8:25). When another storm threatened Paul and his shipmates, he counselled, “Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved” (Acts 27:31). This word also applied to healing the sick. In three instances of Jesus’ healing ministry, He pronounced to the recipients of healing, “Your faith has saved you” (Mk 5:34; 10:52; Lk 17:19). In James 5:15, the word σῴξω (*sodzo*) is even translated “heal.” Therefore, it is evident that God’s salvation plan, in both Testaments, applies to the whole person – soul and body.

The New Testament term denoting redemption is ἀπολύτρωσις (*apolutrosis*). It comes from the root λύω (*luo*), which means “set free” or “destroy.” We encounter the basic meaning of λύω (*luo*) in Luke 13:15: “You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie (λύω) his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water {him}?” Both of these words were used in a commercial sense in relation to trade and freeing of slaves.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Another key word derived from λύω (*luo*) is λύτρον (*lutron*), i.е., “ransom.” For the Greeks, this term described liberating something or someone by paying a fee. It could involve freeing prisoners of war, freeing slaves, or cancelling a debt.

It is important to note that receiving a ransom was an act of grace. A slave owner could receive a ransom for liberating a slave, or refuse it.[[34]](#footnote-34) Also significant is that Jesus called Himself λύτρον (*lutron*), i.е., “ransom”: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom (λύτρον) for many”(Mk 10:45; сf. 1 Tim 2:6).[[35]](#footnote-35) We thank the Father that He received the ransom for our redemption – the life of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The New Testament uses the word ἀπολύτρωσις (*apolutrosis*) basically in two ways: liberation from sin and liberation from death. It is used for liberation both from the penalty for sin (Eph 1:7), and from its power (Tit 2:14).

In future chapters, we will discuss other New Testament term for salvation, such as “justification” and “sanctification.”

**2. Survey of New Testament Teaching**

**а. Synoptic Gospels**

In contrast to the Old Testament, the New Testament devotes much more attention to the theme of spiritual salvation. The New Testament focuses on salvation from the ultimate danger – eternal damnation. It reveals that people are under God’s wrath and therefore are in need of salvation from it. This is why the angel Gabriel announced that Jesus came “to save His people from their sins” (Matt 1:21). Jesus Himself stated that He came with the goal “to save that which was lost” (Matt 18:11; сf. Lk 19:10; Lk 15).[[36]](#footnote-36) The way He would do this is by giving “His life a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45).[[37]](#footnote-37)

The salvation offered by Messiah Jesus was novel to the Jews of His day. They could not appreciate His saving mission since they were looking for Messiah to be a political deliverer. It is interesting to note that at the births of Jesus and John the Baptist, people expressed their expectation of salvation in a mixed form: sometimes physical (Lk 1:51-55; 68-74; 2:38), sometime spiritual (Lk 1:75-77; 2:30-32).[[38]](#footnote-38) Even John the Baptist began to doubt the purpose of Christ’s mission. In response, Jesus explained,

Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: {the} blind receive sight, {the} lame walk, {the} lepers are cleansed, and {the} deaf hear, {the} dead are raised up, {the} poor have the gospel preached to them. Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me (Lk 7:22-23).

In addition, Christ brought spiritual salvation by an unexpected means. Jews of that time believed that people receive righteousness before the Lord based on their observance of the Mosaic Law. Yet, after His conversation with “the rich young ruler,” the Lord announced, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Lk 18:25). When His disciples objected, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus responded, “The things that are impossible with people are possible with God” (Lk 18:26-27).

The salvation that Jesus offers is, in reality, not foreign to Old Testament revelation. Isaiah spoke of the “Suffering Servant of Yahweh,” who bears the sins of the people (Isa 53). The New Testament writers see the fulfillment of this prophecy in Jesus of Nazareth.[[39]](#footnote-39) In addition, Jesus associated salvation with the coming of God’s kingdom, with which His contemporaries were well acquainted.[[40]](#footnote-40)

Although the New Testament focuses on salvation in a spiritual sense, the Synoptic Gospels include physical deliverance in the concept of salvation as well. Jesus, in fact, called the healings He performed “salvation” (e.g. Lk 7:50; 17:19). Additionally, He did not draw a distinction between the spiritual and physical aspects of salvation, but combined them. When healing the lame man, Jesus declared to him, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mk 2:5).[[41]](#footnote-41)

Moreover, the fact that the Lord required faith from those He healed reveals the connection between salvation and faith. He spoke of salvation by faith directly in His parable of the sower: “Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not *believe and be saved*” (Lk 8:12).[[42]](#footnote-42)

Finally, in the Synoptics, God’s salvation is also eschatological, that is, it is fully accomplished at the end of time. Twice in these Gospels, we encounter the prediction, “Those who endure to the end will be saved” (Mk 13:20; Matt 10:22).[[43]](#footnote-43) In addition, as was predicted in Isaiah, salvation will extend beyond the borders of Israel. Jesus commissioned His disciples that “repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations” (Lk 24:47).[[44]](#footnote-44)

**b. Acts of the Apostles**

In the book of Acts, Jesus is the only Savior. God the Father exalted Him as “a Prince and a Savior” (Acts 5:31). Before the leaders of Israel, Peter boldly proclaimed, “There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12), and before the people, Peter promised, “Everyone who calls on the name of the lord will be saved.”[[45]](#footnote-45) In answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul responded, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:30-31). Even demons acknowledged salvation through Jesus (Acts 16:17).

Salvation is not only for the soul, but also for the body. In Acts 4:9, we read that a lame man was “healed” (literally, “saved”). Salvation provides not only forgiveness of sins, but relief from the consequences of sin, which was demonstrated in the miracles of healing that accompanied the preaching of the gospel.[[46]](#footnote-46)

It is interesting to note that the early chapters of Acts focus on salvation for the Jews. God appointed Jesus “to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31). In addition, “God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus” (Acts 13:23). In the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch, Paul assured the Jews and God-fearers gathered there, “To us the message of this salvation has been sent” (Acts 13:26).

At the same time, Peter also preached salvation to the Gentiles who were gathered at Cornelius’ house (Acts 11:14). God charged Paul, “I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the end of the earth” (Acts 13:47). In the end, Peter declared that in God’s salvation there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles: “We believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are” (Acts 15:11).

**c. General Epistles**

The General Epistles further develop our understanding of God’s plan of salvation. James writes that God is “able to save” (Jam 4:12). In his brief epistle, he speaks about various dimensions of salvation. God saves in the sense of justification (1:12; 5:20), sanctification (2:14), and bodily healing (5:15 – using the term σῴξω - *sodzo*). In James’ treatment of justification, however, he lays great stress on the good works that accompany justification. Possibly, for this reason, James speaks of salvation as a future entity.

Peter, however, speaks of salvation as past, present, and future.[[47]](#footnote-47) On the one hand, believers in Jesus are already redeemed from their “futile way of life” (1 Pet 1:18) and are already “a people for {God's} own possession” (1 Pet 2:9). On the other hand, salvation is only fully revealed “in the last time” (1 Pet 1:5). Followers of Jesus will then receive the “outcome of (their) faith,” which is the salvation of their souls (1 Pet 1:9). Nevertheless, Peter warns, “It is with difficulty that the righteous is saved” (1 Pet 4:18).[[48]](#footnote-48) Finally, for Peter salvation has a present application as well. Christians can “grow in respect to salvation” through the Word of God (1 Pet 2:2).

Furthermore, Peter often ascribes the title “Savior” to Jesus (2 Pet 1:1, 11; 2:20; 3:2, 18).[[49]](#footnote-49) For him, Christ is also the Redeemer (2 Pet 2:1), who redeemed the world with His blood (1 Pet 1:18-19).[[50]](#footnote-50) It is interesting to note that Peter associates receiving salvation not only with faith (1 Pet 1:5-9), but also with water baptism (1 Pet 3:21). At the same time, he qualifies that what saves is “not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Finally, Peter makes other comments on salvation.[[51]](#footnote-51) The Old Testament prophets only partially understood God’s salvation plan, which is now revealed to the Church (1 Pet 1:10). In addition, the way of salvation is still open – God continues to show patience toward the unrepentant (2 Pet 3:15).

In Hebrews, Jesus is assigned such titles as the “author of salvation” (Heb 2:10) and the “source of eternal salvation” (Heb 5:9). Consequently, He “is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him” (Heb 7:25). Redemption is accomplished through His blood, which was shed as a sacrifice for sins (Heb 9:12-15).[[52]](#footnote-52) Since the main goal of Hebrews is to urge Jewish believers to hold fast their faith until the end, it is no surprise that the author presents salvation as a future entity (Heb 1:14; 9:28), which one must highly value (Heb 2:3). The book of Jude also emphasizes the need for perseverance (Jude 5, 23).[[53]](#footnote-53)

**d. Epistles of Paul**

The apostle Paul provides us with a very exhaustive treatment of the topic of salvation. First, the apostle to the Gentiles reveals that God’s plan of salvation dates back to eternity past. It was granted us “in Christ Jesus from all eternity” (2 Tim 1:9).[[54]](#footnote-54) God “chose us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4), but revealed this mystery through the apostles’ teaching (Eph 3:9).[[55]](#footnote-55)

For both Paul and all the New Testament writers, Jesus is the only Savior. God the Father made Him for us “wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30). He is rightfully called the “Savior” (Tit 1:4; 2:13; 3:6), a title also attributed to the Father, who initiated this salvation plan (Tit 1:3; 2:10; 3:4).[[56]](#footnote-56)

Paul boldly declares that Jesus accomplished our salvation through His death and resurrection from the dead. The redemption of the world comes as a result of the Son’s sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, where He shed His precious blood: “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” (Eph 1:7).[[57]](#footnote-57) He “gave Himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:6).[[58]](#footnote-58) We “were reconciled to God through the death of His Son” (Rom 5:10).[[59]](#footnote-59) In the final chapters of his first Corinthian correspondence, Paul emphasizes the importance of these redemptive events: “I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3), and, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins” (1 Cor 15:17).[[60]](#footnote-60)

God offers the salvation Christ accomplished through a gift of grace. Paul insists that good works do not earn salvation: “(He) has saved us… not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace” (2 Tim 1:9), “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy” (Tit 3:5), and “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph 2:8-9).[[61]](#footnote-61) The final part of verse 9 reveals why God offers salvation freely: “…that no one may boast.”

Additionally, Paul teaches that the Lord wants to save all people. He gave up His Son to redeem the whole world. Paul wrote to Timothy, God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, {and} one mediator also between God and men, {the} man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:4-6).[[62]](#footnote-62) Consequently, God is the “Savior of all men, especially of believers” (1 Tim 4:10).

However, God has set conditions for receiving His free gift of salvation: “Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (see Acts 20:21). Paul lays special stress on the aspect of faith: “You have been saved through faith” (Eph 2:8), “The righteous {man} shall live by faith” (Rom 1:17), “{The} righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe” (Rom 3:22), “A man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ” (Gal 2:16), etc. In addition, to inherit eternal life one must remain in faith until the end (Col 1:23; 1 Cor 15:2).

In order to believe in Christ, one must hear about Him. Therefore, Paul underscores the importance of preaching the gospel. He eloquently expresses this thought in his epistle to the Romans: “How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10:14). Earlier, Paul called the gospel “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16).[[63]](#footnote-63)

In the writings of other New Testament authors, we noted that salvation can apply to different times: past, present, and future. Paul treats salvation in the same manner. Regarding salvation’s past aspect, redemption in Christ provides the believer with forgiveness of sins and justification before God: “Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). Moreover, Paul also claims that we “have now received the reconciliation” (Rom 5:11). Also see Ephesians 2:5-8 and Titus 3:5-8.[[64]](#footnote-64)

Regarding salvation in the present, we obtain deliverance from the power of sin. We read in Titus 2:14, “Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.” Furthermore, Paul writes in Romans 6:18, “Having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” Thanks to salvation in Christ, believers are free from sin’s power and able to live righteously. Therefore, Paul urges followers of Christ to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12).[[65]](#footnote-65)

Additionally, redemption from sin results in liberation from Satan’s power (Col 1:13-14). When people are delivered from the dominion of sin, the devil can no longer control them through temptations and enticements. In this way, believers enjoy liberation from Satan’s rule. Other aspects of our present enjoyment of salvation include adoption into God’s family (Gal 4:4-5) and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Gal 4:6).[[66]](#footnote-66)

In the future, salvation will consist of victory over death: “We ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for {our} adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:23). In that day, we will also be glorified (Col 3:4). Paul joyfully anticipates that day: “Now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed” (Rom 13:11). By the Holy Spirit, believers are “sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30).[[67]](#footnote-67) Finally, although believers are already justified at the present time, justification has a future application, when the justification we have already received by faith will be confirmed.

Nonetheless, since we have already received reconciliation with God, we can with confidence claim that we are already saved. Romans 5:9-10 assures us, “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath {of God} through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

Arnold summarizes well the three time aspects of salvation of which Paul writes:

For Paul, the past dimension of salvation is generally conceived as justification, redemption, and reconciliation, while its present dimension is depicted in terms of the Spirit’s sanctifying work. Its future dimension is said to be glorification.[[68]](#footnote-68)

In conclusion, we may comment on the scope of salvation in Paul’s teaching. As we know, he had a burning desire to reach his fellow countrymen – the Jewish nation (Rom 10:1).[[69]](#footnote-69) He understood that salvation first and foremost was offered to them (Rom 1:16). Yet, God appointed Paul an apostle to the Gentiles to reach them for Christ.[[70]](#footnote-70) To the Gentile believers in Ephesus, Paul joyfully announces, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household” (Eph 2:19).

Paul also understands that salvation has an application to the natural world as well. In Romans chapter 8, he writes in connection with believers’ resurrection, “The creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). We anticipate a time of great blessing for the planet during the millennial reign of Christ, when creation will enjoy greater freedom from the curse and will better serve humanity.

**e. Epistles of John**

We will conclude our survey with the writings of the apostle John, who prefers the expressions “life” or “eternal life” when speaking of salvation. In his Gospel, he equates salvation with “life” 36 times, and in his epistles – 13 times.[[71]](#footnote-71) At times, he equates salvation with the “kingdom of God” (Jn 3:3-5).[[72]](#footnote-72)

Nevertheless, in John’s writings we do encounter the word “salvation” as well.[[73]](#footnote-73) God sent His Son to save the world (Jn 3:17; 12:47). Christ explained to Samaritan woman that “salvation is from the Jews” (Jn 4:22). John further clarifies that this “salvation” is in Jesus Christ, who is “Savior of the world” (Jn 4:42; 1 Jn 4:14). Only those who come to the Father through Him can be saved (Jn 10:9).

As was noted earlier in the writings of Paul, John also emphasizes salvation by faith (Jn 3:16-18). In order to inspire faith among the people, Jesus appeals to several “witnesses”: Scripture, miracles, and John the Baptist. He makes this appeal so that “you may be saved” (Jn 5:34).

In the book of Revelation, salvation is seen in a different light. It is presented under the figure of the Lamb slain for sins (Rev 5:6). In connection with the breaking of the seals, it is written, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood {men} from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev 5:9). Christ “released us from our sins by His blood” (Rev 1:5). Those cleansed by the blood of the Lamb are dressed in “white robes” (Rev 6:11; 7:14) and by it overcome the “accuser of the brethren” (Rev 12:10-11).

For His saving work, God receives glory: “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (Rev 7:10), and, “I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God’” (Rev 19:1).

**f. Summary**

In summary, we first note that the New Testament teaching on salvation has much variety of expression and application. It is especially applies to spiritual needs, but can also relate to temporal ones. It embraces all time elements: reconciliation with God (past), life transformation (present), and bodily resurrection (future). Salvation is available to all people and even affects the natural world. Liefeld offers this helpful summary: “Beginning with the initial point of conversion, salvation terminology is applied to a full range of blessings, including forgiveness, justification, redemption, sanctification, and glorification.”[[74]](#footnote-74)

White expands this thought about the blessings of redemption:

…by what we are saved from. This includes sin and death; guilt and estrangement; ignorance of truth; bondage to habit and vice; fear of demons, of death, of life, of God, of hell; despair of self; alienation from others; pressures of the world; a meaningless life.[[75]](#footnote-75)

Yet, one factor unites all these aspects of salvation: the only Savior, Jesus Christ, through His sacrifice on Calvary. In addition, salvation comes as a gift of God’s grace received by faith. Rightmire comments on the Christocentric nature of salvation:

Fundamental to the message of the New Testament is the announcement that Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfillment of Israel’s messianic hope and that, in him, the long-awaited redemption has arrived. Deliverance of humankind from its state of alienation from God has been accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ.[[76]](#footnote-76)

1. Brown F., Driver S. R., Briggs C. A. Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon. – Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000. – P. 446 (abbreviated BDB). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Liefeld W. L. Salvation // Bromiley G. W. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. *–* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 4. – P. 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Pecota D. The Saving Work of Christ // Horton S. M. Systematic Theology. – Rev. Ed. – BookMasters. Kindle Edition. – P. 371-372. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid., p. 372. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Liefeld makes mention of other Hebrew terms for salvation, such as פָּלַט (*palat* – “flee”), אָזַר (*azar* – “help”), and מָלַט (*malat* – “flee”). See Liefeld, v. 4, p. 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Rightmire R. D. Redemption // Elwell W. Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996. – P. 664. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. BDB, p. 497-498. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Murray J. Redeemer, Redemption // Bromiley G. W. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. *–* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 4. – P. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 288-289; Arnold W. T. Salvation // Elwell W. Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996. – P. 702. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Rightmire, p. 664. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. White R. E. O. Salvation // Elwell W. A. Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. – 2nd ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001. – P. 1050; Arnold, p. 701. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Arnold, p. 701. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See: Isa 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8; 60:16; 63:16 (Rightmire, p. 664; Murray, v. 4, p. 62). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 288-289. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Harrison E. F. Redeemer, Redemption // Elwell W. A. Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. – 2nd ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001. – P. 994. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Arnold, p. 702. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. White, p. 1049. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Arnold, p. 701. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ibid., v. 4, p. 290. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Ibid., v. 4, p. 291. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Rightmire, p. 664. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Kittel G., Friedrich G., Bromiley G. W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1995. – P. 1132. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Rightmire, p. 664. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Kittel, p. 545. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Rightmire, p. 665. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Harrison, p. 994. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. See: Matt 8:17; 12:18; Acts 4:27, 30; 8:32-33; Rom 15:21; 1 Pet 2:22-25 (Rightmire, p. 665). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Arnold, p. 702. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Arnold, p. 702. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. White observes that Peter’s call to salvation had a moral thrust as well: “Be saved from this perverse generation!” (Acts 2:40). See White, p. 1050. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 294. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. White, p. 1050. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 294. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Murray, v. 4, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 294. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 294; Murray, v. 4, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. White, p. 1050; Liefeld, v. 4, p. 294. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Arnold, p. 702. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Harrison, p. 994. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Murray, v. 4, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. White, p. 1049. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Arnold, p. 703. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. White, p. 1050. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Arnold, p. 703. The verb “to save” is in the present tense in 1 Corinthians 1:18 and 2 Corinthians 2:15 (White, p. 1050). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Arnold, p. 703. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Rightmire, p. 665; White, p. 1050. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Arnold, p. 703. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. White, p. 1049. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Ibid., p. 1050. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Arnold, p. 702. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Liefeld, v. 4, p. 294. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Ibid., v. 4, p. 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. White, p. 1050. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Rightmire, p. 664. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)