

CHAPTER 6: SAVING MANY TO SAVE A FEW AND FEW TO SAVE THE MANY

In addition too, and of possibly stronger support for a Cosmological Salvation than the terms for salvation in the Old Testament, are the Old Testament stories of Salvation. The individual heroes in these stories are often referred to as types. But even when not a type they do lend patterns of how God accomplishes salvation. As we shall see from the following examples, the extent and implication of salvation reaches beyond the mere salvation of the elect.³⁴

I. Examples from Noah and the Flood

The judgement of man through the flood was also a judgement of the earth. The dominion of man was judged together with man. Creation was cursed because of man and was therefore judged with man. God also used the dominion of man as the instrument of judgement upon man. Man abused his dominion, so God used the dominion to judge man. There is a sense of Divine justice in the flood³⁵ account. God uses the abused to judge the abuser. Man's continual sin perverted the beauty and purity of creation. The creation responded to man's abuse by swallowing man up in judgement.

As the creation was judged with man, so the creation was delivered with man. The two are inseparable because man cannot be separated from "the image of God". God did not remove His image from man by taking away man's dominion. He did however, reflect in the creation the marred nature of the image. The creation was radically altered to reflect the damaged image of man.³⁶ Both man and creation were delivered, though in an altered condition. It was because man was in a position of dominion that man was placed in a responsible position of deliverance of creation, thus God used man (Noah) to save creation. Salvation was physical and had cosmological significance.

New testament references to Noah and the flood compare conditions at the time of the flood with those prior to the judgement and second coming of Christ (Mt. 24:37-39; Lu. 17:26,27; 2 Pe. 2:5). Noah preserved the creation, mankind, and the future elect of mankind. He saved the world from total annihilation, carrying within himself and his family all humanity and those yet to be saved spiritually. By analogy Christ physically saved all people in order to spiritually save many people from amongst all.

II. Examples from Lot and Sodom (Gen. 18-19)

God often withholds wrath on the wicked for the sake of the Righteous. As long as there are righteous people in the world the unrighteous are protected from God's judgement. God told Abraham that he would spare the judgement of the wicked for the sake of as few as ten righteous

³⁴ We are restricting our examples to Genesis. To include all the great stories could take up another book.

³⁵ The flood was an act of Divine cleansing and burial. The most impure of creation was washed from the earth. It was also the instrument of death. The fossil record is not a record of the evolutionary advancement of creation, rather it is a record of Divine judgement. Symbols of the flood are seen in Baptism. Creation was delivered through washing and burial. Believer's baptism is both a symbolic cleansing and burial of the old creature.

³⁶ The beauty of the present creation is a mere reflection of its previous glory. The pre-flood creation was lush with vegetation and animal life. Man's relationship with his creation was of partnership and trust. The life span of all creatures was at least five times longer.

people in Sodom. The Lord did not find ten righteous people in Sodom. The only righteous person was Lot, Abraham's nephew. So the Lord did not spare the city. Even though there is no indication that Lot's family was righteous, God physically saved Lot's wife and daughters on account of righteous Lot.³⁷

Isaiah recognizes the principle that God spares the wicked on behalf of the righteous. He states, "Unless the Lord of Host had left us a very small remnant we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah" (Isa 1:9).

This principle is effective in our view of a Cosmological Salvation. Before Christ's sacrifice there was none found righteous. The entire world was pronounced guilty. The crucifixion of Christ was the attempt of humanity to execute the Creator and was the climax of man's wickedness. It sealed the verdict of judgement on the world. But, because God viewed it as a sacrifice by Christ it was accepted as atonement for the sins of the elect. The elect received the gift of righteousness through faith. God spared the world physical judgement for the sake of those declared righteous in Christ. In this since the entire world has been saved.

The rapture of the church can be viewed as a removal of the righteous prior to God's final judgement of the wicked. Several New Testament references to Sodom and Gomorrah form an analogy with the rapture. In the end times the condition of the world is compared with the wicked conditions of Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:28,29). As God removed the righteous Lot from Sodom prior to judgement so he will remove the remaining righteous before Christ comes to judge the earth.

III. Examples from Joseph in Egypt

Joseph was the Savior of his world. It was a physical salvation. Joseph saved His world from physical famine. It was a universal salvation (at least in the scope of his world). He delivered all of Egypt and the surrounding nations from physical starvation. God's plan included the salvation of His chosen people, the many for the sake of the few. He did it by providing salvation to all and then drawing His chosen people (Israel) into a more specific plan.

In the Old Testament it is impossible to view salvation from a mere spiritual perspective. New Testament salvation is built upon the principles and concepts of Old Testament Salvation. The ancient world viewed famine and other natural disasters as a judgement from God/gods. Joseph delivered his world from the judgement of famine. He brought his brothers to salvation through the salvation of all. Christ delivered the world from immediate destruction by turning back the physical judgement of God upon the earth. He provided salvation (spiritual and physical) for the chosen while providing physical salvation for all.

IV. Examples from Moses with Israel

God was angered to the point of wrath upon the nation of Israel for making a molten calf (Exodus 32:1-9). Through Moses' entreaty, and later the offering of a sacrifice he was able to avert God's immediate wrath (32:11-34; Psalm 106:21-23). Though Moses was able to avert God's immediate physical wrath upon the entire nation his actions would not keep the people from future judgement, for God stated, "in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin." (vs.34).

³⁷ It could be questioned whether God saved Lot because of Lot, or if He saved Lot because of His relationship with Abraham. Either way, our principle still applies.

Jesus, like Moses, mediated for the sake of the cosmos, turning back the physical judgement of God (1 John 2:1b). The effect was that God turned back his immediate judgement. This does not negate judgement, for the unrepentant are held accountable for their sin, even if judgement is temporarily withheld.