

# SOTERIOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

## PART 17

### ADOPTION, PART 2

[NOTE: The Soteriology # 16 lecture need some correction concerning the Joshua = Jesus = Yeshua portion of the lesson. It was incomplete. I have included the completed lecture notes here for that section. The audio is corrected at the beginning of this lesson. The appropriate Scripture quotations are included in the lesson # 16 notes.]

The Hebrew word, יְשׁוּעָה, ["salvation," yeshua, as quoted in Isaiah 49:6] means deliverance, safety, rescue; it is to be in a state of freedom from danger. It can also mean salvation in the sense of deliverance in a religious sense. This sense of salvation is present in the Lord's name, Jesus. The angel told Joseph that the Son's name would be Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. Many believers today, particularly Jewish believers, refer to Jesus as Yeshua. In Hebrew Joshua is יְהוֹשֻׁעַ which means "the Lord delivers" or "Yahweh delivers." His name was originally הוֹשֵׁעַ ["Hosea"] which means deliverance or salvation. Moses changed it to Joshua from Hosea. The name has significance for Joshua who, under the guidance of the Lord, conquered the land for Israel at the end of the Exodus. In Greek, Jesus is the equivalent translation for the Hebrew Joshua. In the Greek, Jesus is Ἰησοῦς. The Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament translation, translated Joshua as Ἰησοῦς. Ἰησοῦς is the Hellenized form of יְשׁוּעַ which in turn is the postexilic short form of יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, Joshua. The Hebrew language shortened the name of Joshua from the time of his book in the Old Testament to the time they returned from the Babylonian exile. Yeshua became the Hellenized short form of Joshua in Hebrew and in the Greek it is transliterated as Ἰησοῦς and therefore the two names are equivalent. Since Yeshua became the short form for Joshua in Hebrew and the Greek name for Jesus is equivalent to Joshua, Yeshua became a name that refers to Jesus.

### ADOPTION, PART 2

Paul only uses the Greek word expressing this concept of adoption five times in the New Testament.

Romans 8:15 <sup>15</sup>For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption [υἰοθεσία] as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

Those who believe receive the status of adult sons who, in the context of Paul's thought in these verses, are no longer under the bondage that results from being under the Law. Christians can approach God in an intimate way and call on Him because they are members of the family. Members of the family do not have the spirit of a slave but instead have the spirit of a son of the house. One commentator, Rene Lopez, believes this word is better translated "sonship." "...(*huiothesias* is best translated as Sonship, rather than adoption. The idea of Sonship refers to the OT Jewish view of the adoption rights or benefits of the firstborn that now belong to all believers. One of these benefits is to call God "Abba, Father," in times of need. Paul uses *huiothesias* in [Rom.] 9:4 to refer to the benefits or advantages that belonged to the Jews. Thus believers have nothing to *fear* because they *received a Spirit of Sonship* with all the benefits that pertain to it (Gal. 4:5)" [Rene A. Lopez, "Romans" in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, p. 2:664]. The concept of sonship as it is developed in the Old Testament Scriptures is certainly interconnected with adoption as Paul uses it in the New Testament.

Romans 8:23 <sup>23</sup>And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption [*υιοθεσία*] as sons, the redemption of our body.

Paul presents the truth here that our adoption will ultimately result in our glorification. We groan within ourselves because we have begun to experience the privileges of being sons but the full experience of that will not be realized until our body is transformed into an eternal body that is removed from the presence of sin and placed in the presence of the Lord. Having begun to experience the first fruits of the Spirit, we want more; we want to have victory over sin and that will only come in the resurrection. At some point, our sonship will translate into the realization of the promise that we will be in the image of Christ.

1 John 3:2 <sup>2</sup>Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

Romans 8:29 <sup>29</sup>For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

In Romans 9:4-5, Paul uses the concept of adoption as sons to proclaim that just as Israel was adopted as sons and enjoyed and is enjoying, present tense, privileges, so too do the individual Christian believers enjoy privileges. Paul also declared that the Jews are blessed because the Scriptures came through them. While there is much more to this concerning Israel, Paul is making the analogy that believers in both groups have

privileges. You may not be able to convince a lot of Jewish people that they are enjoying privileges today, but they are. Jokes often depend on truth to inform the humor and I once read a cartoon that had a Jewish man saying, "G-d, if we are the chosen people, please choose someone else." In the recent Gaza war, I read an account quoting a Muslim who was being questioned about the fact their missiles generally seemed to miss any important target in Israel. The reply went something like this (I'm paraphrasing because I don't remember the exact quote): "Their God causes our missiles to go off course and fall to the ground." Israel, adopted as sons of God, are still enjoying some degree of God's blessing although it is not what it could have been. To understand what could have been for Israel, read the blessings God promised them for obedience in Deuteronomy 28:1-14. In order to understand what is happening to them now, read the curses God promised them for disobedience and rebellion in Deuteronomy 28:15-68. Finally, read what wonderful blessings God has promised them when, not if, they return to Him in Deuteronomy 30:1-14. God is not through with Israel.

Romans 9:4-5 <sup>4</sup>who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, <sup>5</sup>whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Exodus 4:22 <sup>22</sup>"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, "Israel is My son, My firstborn.

Romans 3:1-2 <sup>1</sup>Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? <sup>2</sup>Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Paul also used the adoption analogy to explain that Christ came to redeem people from slavery under the Law and by removing them from bondage to sin they are being placed into the status of sonship in the family of God.

Galatians 4:1-7 <sup>1</sup>Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, <sup>2</sup>but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. <sup>3</sup>So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. <sup>4</sup>But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, <sup>5</sup>so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption [υιοθεσία] as sons. <sup>6</sup>Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" <sup>7</sup>Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

A child in Greek society at that time was under the guidance of a pedagogue, a teacher, and even though he was the heir, he was not in command of anything until his father allowed it. In the same way, people are in bondage under the Law which was a tutor to lead people to Christ. Christ came to redeem or purchase out of the slave market of sin those who were in bondage so they might become free as adopted sons of God. We receive the Holy Spirit and become an heir in the family of God.

The fact that we are heirs and have an inheritance awaiting us is amply attested in Scripture but the content of that inheritance is not clearly spelled out. We know that we are the bride of Christ and we will rule and reign with Him but the details of how that will work out are hidden from us. We also know the things that await us are beyond anything we can, as finite human beings, imagine. An inheritance, κληρονομία, means an inheritance; it is a transfer of land or possessions from a deceased person, most often a parent, to a child or a descendant. This word is used in the Septuagint to translate inheritance, הַרְשָׁה.

1 Peter 1:3–4 <sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup>to obtain an inheritance [κληρονομία] which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

The last Scripture in which Paul used “adoption” was Ephesians 1:5.

Ephesians 1:5 <sup>5</sup>He predestined us to adoption [υιοθεσία] as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

Predestined does not mean that God chose beforehand those who were going to be adopted as sons; it means God “determined beforehand (predestined) that all who believe in Jesus Christ will be adopted into [H]is family” [J. B. Bond, “Ephesians” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, p. 2:863].

Justification relates to the legal declaration of “Not guilty” and refers to our standing in Christ as believers; adoption refers to our actual relationship with God after we are justified. This becomes a familial relationship in place of the former estranged, hostile, rebellious relationship. Adoption, sonship, and inheritance are all concepts that come together in terms of our relationship with God.

## ASSURANCE

Assurance or eternal security. Assurance, πληροφορία, means complete certainty and full assurance. It is to be completely certain of the truth of something. There is nothing

equivocal about this word; it means complete certainty. The words “eternal security” are not used in Scripture together but the concept of eternal security is solidly entrenched in the Word of God. We will examine the meaning of both words and then put them together as a biblical doctrine.

Hebrews 10:22 <sup>22</sup>let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance [πληροφορία] of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

In order to enhance English comprehension, the word “full” is inserted here by the translators as a device to assist readers of English to comprehend the literal meaning of assurance. In English, we can understand “assurance” to be somewhat less than complete certainty so the translators added the adjective to make it clear. In the Greek, the word means complete certainty. If they really wanted to leave no doubt about the word’s meaning, they could have translated this as “let us draw near with a sincere heart and complete certainty of faith...” and that would have left no doubt concerning the meaning intended while still being more literal in conformance to the original language.

Eternal, αἰώνιος, means eternal, perpetual, or belonging to the ages (αἰών); it refers to an unlimited duration of time. In the era of Plato, the meaning of αἰών as a timeless concept was developed. Eventually, the Greeks even developed a mystery religion for the so-called god of eternity and the precepts of that religion were referred as the Mysteries of Aion [*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, s. v. “αἰών”].

John 6:47 <sup>47</sup>“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has [ἔχω] eternal [αἰώνιος] life.

It is important to note that anyone and everyone who believes “has” eternal life. This is an ongoing fact from the moment of a person’s new birth. We don’t get eternal life someday; we have eternal life right now. “Has” is a present active verb meaning that this eternal life was obtained at a moment in time and the results of that acquisition continue on. It may be correct to say we don’t have the full realization of it right now because we have not yet been awarded glorification salvation, but we have a real experiential eternal life in Christ right now. That life is a quality of life that begins now and it not only will not ever end but it cannot ever end.

John 3:14–15 <sup>14</sup>“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; <sup>15</sup>so that [ἵνα] whoever believes will in Him have [ἔχω] eternal [αἰώνιος] life.

Verse 15 is also telling us that eternal life is a present possession but the English translations, in my opinion, leave something to be desired. When they use the word “will” in the translation, it sounds like a future tense in English. However, in the Greek, the verbs used here, “believes” and “have,” are present tense. “Believes” is active and “have” is subjunctive. The present tense verb is an action that occurred, from the point of view of the author, in the present with results that continue on. The subjunctive following ἵνα, translated “so that,” indicates purpose and the present subjunctive indicates a continuous action. My point is that the English translation “will in Him have” makes this sound like it is referring to the future. This could have been translated such that it would give English readers the aspect of a present possession of eternal life that continues on into eternity. This could have been translated, “...in order that whoever believes in Him continually has eternal life.” But that sounds a bit stilted and it is unnecessary when it could simply have said, “...in order that whoever believes in Him has eternal life.” One other way this could have been rendered that is more clearly stated is, “...in order that whoever believes has eternal life in Him.” Most commentators acknowledge this teaching is concerning eternal life that is granted based on belief in Him and that is a present possession truth. Leon Morris wrote, “Anyone who has believes has (the present tense points to a present possession) eternal life in Christ” [Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel According to John*, rev., p. 200]. If that is, in fact, the meaning of the verse, then why was it translated in such a way that this truth is somewhat obscured when it could have been translated in a more clear manner, yet all the while maintaining a commitment to literal hermeneutics? I don’t know the answer to that, but I would translate it in such a way to make the present and continuing aspect of eternal life perfectly clear. Some translations (RSV, ESV) use “may have eternal life” but that doesn’t solve the problem either. “May” makes it sound like you might have it or you might not have it. If everyone clearly understood the clear truth that the believer possesses eternal life from the moment of belief, an awful lot of false teaching about losing salvation would be eliminated. People would understand they could never lose their salvation and others would understand that eternal life as a possession is not dependent on anything they do or do not do. It is vitally important to correctly understand this issue.

An interesting note on these two verses in John concerns Arminian theology because they teach that you can lose your salvation by committing egregious personal sins or by falling away from the faith. I accessed all the Arminian resources I have (which admittedly isn’t many), and not one that I could find addresses these two verses. Could it be these verses undermine their theology so they ignore them and hope no one notices? A few years ago, I convinced one Arminian Christian that believers are eternally secure by asking him whether or not he received eternal life the moment he believed. He said, “Yes.” My question to him then was, “If you received eternal life the moment you believed, then how can you lose something that is eternal?” I pointed out

to him that by definition something eternal has no end. He realized the cognitive dissonance, which is the state of having inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes, in his theological belief system that posits something eternal could be lost in contrast with the Bible that says eternal life is just that, eternal, and cannot be lost so he changed his mind on the issue.

The word αἰών is used in Revelation as part of the expression, εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, which means “to the ages of the ages,” i.e. “forever and ever.” That phrase is used twelve times in the book of Revelation.

“Eternal” is the translation most frequently used in the New Testament for αἰώνιος. It is used as an adjective to modify many words: fire, punishment, sin, weight, destruction, judgment, bonds, God, Spirit, life, glory, salvation, redemption, dominion, dwellings, inheritance, power, kingdom, covenant, and gospel. In addition to that, the word αἰδίος is translated “eternal” twice, once by Jude with the word bonds and once by Paul with the word power. The concept of eternity is a powerful biblical truth. This list of nouns points out the fact the Bible speaks to not only an eternal life but also to an eternal death. While both of these states, eternal life and eternal death, point to the fact of a never ending life experience, the quality of that life is exactly opposite one from the other. All human beings are destined to experience an existence without end. Whether that existence will be experienced as eternal life in the presence of the Creator God or as eternal death forever separated from that very same Creator God is the question. The Bible reveals that this concept of eternal is a very important doctrinal concept and every person is subject to it one way or another. Unbelievers do not experience eternal life; if they die having rejected eternal life in Christ, they continue to experience that which they have in their temporal existence which is eternal death. Death is not cessation; death is separation. Unbelievers in the lake of fire will be alive, or at least have some state or form of conscious existence, forever, but they exist in a state of eternal death meaning they are forever separated from their Creator God. While unbelievers have an existence without end, it would be a mistake to say they have eternal life; they are alive but they have an eternal death. When we consider that the words modified by eternal such as fire, punishment, destruction, judgment, and bonds, we can know that this eternal state will be a horrible fate. In contrast, life in Christ is an eternal life that not only exists forever, but it is a life with a quality than can only be imparted to those who have believed in Him and it is both temporal and eternal. Believers possess eternal life the moment they believe and they will experience that life for eternity. That life will be a life of unparalleled love, joy, peace, and prosperity that believers still living on this side of eternity cannot begin to even imagine much less understand.

As I just said, death is separation and not cessation. Dead, νεκρός, and death, θάνατος, are the two primary words used in the New Testament. Νεκρός means dead or lifeless. “In most occurrences of the word [in the New Testament] the thrust of the context is that death need not be regarded as a final state—it has to be viewed in the light of the resurrection of Jesus....Death must no longer be thought of as a realm inaccessible to God and beyond the range of his power [which was the Jewish thinking as it was expressed in the Old Testament]” [*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, s. v. “νεκρός”].

θάνατος means to die or death and it can encompass the process of dying.

The Jews thought they were separated from God at death. Due to the knowledge we now possess as a result of the blessing of progressive revelation, we know that is not the case.

Psalm 6:5 <sup>5</sup>For there is no mention of You in death [תָּמָּ] [θάνατος]; In Sheol who will give You thanks?

That thinking changed over time for at least some of the Jews because both Isaiah and Daniel wrote of the resurrection. Why the Sadducees of Jesus' time did not believe in the resurrection is somewhat puzzling because it was clearly revealed truth. The Pharisees however, did believe in the resurrection. It shouldn't be puzzling to me; we have many Christians today who don't believe clearly stated biblical truths either. Nothing really changes when living a life of bondage under the sun rather than living a life of freedom beyond the sun.

Isaiah 26:19 <sup>19</sup>Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.

Daniel 12:2 <sup>2</sup>“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

The New Testament clearly reveals that death has been conquered and that no man has to be subject to it any longer. We are no longer subject to death once we enter into eternal life.

Romans 6:4 <sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death [θάνατος], so that as Christ was raised from the dead [νεκρός] through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.



Romans 5:17 <sup>17</sup>For if by the transgression of the one, death [θάνατος] reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

The point I am trying to make about death as it bears on the doctrine of Soteriology is that it does not mean cessation; it means separation. My body is not me; my body is the container within which I reside. When I die, my body goes back to dust but the real me, soul and spirit, will go to be with the Lord and await the resurrected, glorified body that has been promised me by God as revealed in the Scriptures. I will simply depart from this temporal, yet eternal existence, into the next phase of my eternal life joined to God in the family of God. Unbelievers do not cease to exist either. Their soul and spirit moves into their next phase of eternal existence which is eternal death completely separated from God in a place the Scriptures refer to as the lake of fire. Jesus referred to this state of eternal punishment in contrast to being in a state of eternal life. People have to be alive in order to undergo eternal punishment in the same way that people have to be alive to enjoy eternal life.

Genesis 3:19 <sup>19</sup>By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

2 Corinthians 5:6–8 <sup>6</sup>Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— <sup>7</sup>for we walk by faith, not by sight— <sup>8</sup>we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

Matthew 25:41 <sup>41</sup>"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

Revelation 20:15 <sup>15</sup>And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Matthew 25:46 <sup>46</sup>"These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."