



# The Way of Salvation

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ARTICLE IV.





# Salvation

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The act or state of deliverance from danger, especially deliverance by God from the penalty and power of sin.



# Salvation By Grace

- ❑ Salvation is by grace and only based on the saving work of Christ.
- ❑ God's declarations of forgiveness in the OT, along with predictions and genuine "types," anticipate the salvation to be accomplished by the Messiah.
- ❑ Thus "salvation" is a term essential to both Testaments.
- ❑ Formulas, contexts, and emphases differ, but the core is the same: God is the only Savior, and human beings depend on Him both for spiritual salvation and for daily welfare.
- ❑ The circumstances in and from which God delivers His people may be extreme, but God is able to save.



# The Old Testament

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# The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

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Hebrew words for salvation:

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*nāṣal* (“deliver”)

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*pālaṭ* (“bring to safety”)

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*pādāh* (var. *pāda* ‘, “redeem”)

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*mālaṭ* (“deliver”)

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*gā`al* (“redeem,” “buy back,” “restore,” “vindicate,” or “deliver”) and *yāša* ‘ (“save,” “help in time of distress,” “rescue,” “deliver,” or “set free”).

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The LXX (Septuagint) translates *yāša* ‘ as *sōzō* (“save”) 138 times.



# The Recipients

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# Personal Needs

- ❑ Individuals find help and deliverance in the face of very specific problems.
- ❑ Barren women receive the gift of a son (Judges 13; 1 Sam 1:1–2:11).
- ❑ Jacob seeks and receives the blessing from his father (Gen 27:1–29).
- ❑ The Psalms pray for deliverance from wicked people (Ps 12:1; 43:1; 86:16), victory for the king (Ps 20:9), and deliverance from personal enemies (Psalms 7, 109).
- ❑ The Psalms also offer thanksgiving when the individual is delivered from trouble (Psalm 34), from dangers in battle (Psalm 18), and from death (Ps 86:13).

# Groups

- ❑ In Genesis 37–50 Joseph's family escapes starvation and Joseph is reconciled with his brothers.
- ❑ The Israelites in Egypt are poor slaves (Exod 1:11, 13, 16; 2:23–25; 5:1–21; 20:2) who are threatened with genocide (Exod 1:8–22).
- ❑ It is especially through the miraculous deliverance at the sea (Exod 14:1–15:21) that God brings the people out of Egypt (Judg 6:8–9; 1 Sam 10:18; Isa 63:7–14; Hos 11:1; 13:4).
- ❑ The Psalms pray that God will continue to deliver his people (Pss 28:8–9; 60:5; 108:6).
- ❑ The Lord of history will save Israel from famine and death (Ps 33:19).
- ❑ The prophets Elijah and Elisha show God's power at work in a salvific way (1 Kings 17–2 Kings 10).
- ❑ God intervenes to save oppressed people.
- ❑ Through that comic caricature of a prophet, Jonah, God's message (Jonah 3:1–10) brings the people of Nineveh to repentance, not a final rejection but a last call to conversion. It is moral conversion that the prophet has to proclaim, not a change of religion.





# The Agents of Salvation

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Self-salvation is not a typically biblical perspective. Deliverance comes through others. Some texts (Psalms 77 and 78) emphasize divine action with virtually no mention of human actors. Other texts (Exodus 1 and 4; Psalm 105) highlight human actors. Reconciling divine and human action was not a biblical problem.



# Human Deliverers

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The just man Abraham intercedes for the people of Sodom (Gen 18:16–33). Through him Israel and all humanity will be blessed by God (Gen 12:1–3; 15:1–6; 17:1–8; 22:15–18).

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A political leader and mystic, Moses delivers Israel from the Egyptian oppression, interprets God’s saving activity, and mediates the Sinai covenant (Exodus).

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The book of Judges recognizes the salvific role of various “judges” (Judg 2:16) such as Othniel (Judg 3:9), Ehud (Judg 3:15), Shamgar (Judg 3:31), Gideon (Judg 8:22; 9:17), and Samson (Judg 13:5).

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David saves Israel (2 Sam 3:18; 19:9); kings have the task of saving the people (Hos 13:10) and of defending the helpless (Ps 72:4). The everlasting dynasty promised to David will make him an agent of salvation for his people (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89; Ezek 37:24–25).

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In the four Servant Songs of Second Isaiah (Isa 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12), the servant – whether understood as a representative individual, the entire people, or both – will restore justice and light to the nations, so that God’s “salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isa 49:6).

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# God the Savior

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Whether or not human deliverers are portrayed, God's role is preeminent.

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It is the divine warrior – not Moses primarily – who saves the people at the sea (Exod 15:1–21).

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Judges and kings have the task of delivering the Israelites.

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Yet the Scriptures acknowledge that God took the initiative in raising up these deliverers for the people (Judg 2:16, 18; 3:9, 15).

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It is God who saved and saves both individuals (2 Sam 12:7; 22:18, 44, 49; Pss 25:5; 27:1) and the nation as a whole (Exod 6:6; Deut 7:8; 13:5; 32:15; 33:29; Isa 41:14; 43:14; 44:24; Psalm 78; 1 Macc 4:30).

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Hence the Psalms pray for deliverance (Pss 69, 77, 79, 80) and praise the Lord as the God who has kept and will keep Jerusalem safe (Psalms 46, 48, 76, 87).

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The names of Joshua (Num 13:8, 16) and others make them living witnesses to the saving power of God, Israel's faithful protector.

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The Lord heals the people like a doctor (Exod 15:26; Num 21:4). He feeds them in the desert (Exodus 16) and miraculously supplies them with water (Exod 15:22–25; 17:1–7).

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# The Nature of Salvation

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There is a strong emphasis on the this-worldly nature of salvation. Material and national prosperity is prominent. Yet it would be false to contrast an OT, very earthly salvation with a NT, spiritual and thoroughly other-worldly salvation. Even a brief examination of the language of “peace,” “blessing,” “life,” “law,” “justice,” and “promise” would seriously modify any such sharp contrast.



# **The Mediation of Salvation**

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Over and over again the Hebrew Scriptures testify to the conviction that God's saving self-communication was mediated through events that the people experienced, interpreted, remembered, and reenacted.

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Various episodes effected salvation, above all the Exodus from Egypt.

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Several covenants, in particular the Sinai covenant, promised salvation.

# The Means of Salvation

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At crucial stages in the Exodus story, theophanies reveal God's saving presence (Exodus 3, 19, 33).

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There is a strong earthly dimension to divine deliverance, yet the means for saving the people are not to be reduced to saving on an ordinary military level (Hos 1:7; 1 Macc 3:18–19).

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Through a providential plague Jerusalem and Judah are saved from Sennacherib (Isa 37:33–37).

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As creator and lord of history, God controls the destinies of the nations whose deliverance is not to be found in armies, great heroes, and war horses (Ps 33:10–19).

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Salvation comes through the gift of wisdom (Prov 1:20–2:22; 8:1–36; Wis 8:2–9:18).

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It is mediated through a new covenant to be written in the human heart (Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 11:19).

# The Conditions for Salvation

- On the human side, certain conditions are required.
- God responds to those who exhibit a trusting faith (Ps 22:4). He delivers those who fear him and hope in his steadfast love (Ps 33:18–19).
- In particular, those who care for the poor, the stranger, and the weak will not lose God’s covenanted protection (Exod 22:20–27).
- The law of holiness brings not only cultic requirements but also ethical obligations toward such defenseless people as strangers (Lev 19:33).
- “He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner therefore; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt” (Deut 10:18–19).
- Deuteronomy presents salvation as a choice of divine blessing rather than divine judgment, a choice of the way which promises to bring life, peace, and freedom: “Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God ... and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God” (Deut 11:26–28; 28:1–68; 30:15–20).
- In a classic passage Micah sums up the appropriate human response to God’s offer and gift of salvation: “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Mic 6:8).



# The New Testament

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# The New Testament Terms

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*sōzō* (“save,” “keep from harm,” “rescue,” “heal,” or “liberate”) 106 times,

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*diasōzō* (compound of *sōzō*) 9 times.

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*sōtēria* (“salvation”) 45 times

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*sōtēr* (“savior”) 24 times

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*sōtērion* (“salvation”) 4 times

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*ruomai* (“rescue”) 15 times in the NT

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other terms (“freedom,” “justification,” “life,” “reconciliation,” “redemption,” “resurrection,” and “rule of God”) to express salvation

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# The Recipients

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# Personal Needs

- ❑ At times, “save” involves some individual being delivered from physical danger.
- ❑ Paul is rescued from various perils, including shipwreck, on his way to Rome (Acts 23:24; 27:20, 31, 34, 43, 44; 28:1, 4).
- ❑ God “delivered” Paul from an unspecified danger in the province of Asia (2 Cor 1:10).
- ❑ The ark meant that Noah and his family “were brought to safety through the water” (1 Pet 3:20). In this context “save” carries baptismal overtones as well (1 Pet 3:21).
- ❑ According to the Synoptic Gospels, sin (Luke 15:18), sickness (Luke 8:48; 17:19), deformity (Mark 3:4; Luke 18:42), demonic possession (Mark 1:34), the threat of death (Mat 14:30), the power of wealth (Mark 10:25–26 par.; Luke 19:1–10), and the constant and pervasive domination of “evil” or “the evil one” (Matt 6:13 par.) put people in need of deliverance.
- ❑ Elizabeth’s problem is very specific: her infertility (Luke 1:7, 18, 25). The gift of a son leads her husband Zechariah to make his prophetic prayer of thanksgiving for God’s saving interventions (Luke 1:67–79).
- ❑ The Synoptics report Peter (Matt 14:30) and the core group of disciples (Matt 8:25 par.) crying out to be “saved” from drowning.

# Collective Needs

- ❑ “All have sinned,” Paul writes, “and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Sin and death are personified forces which enslave Jews and gentiles alike (Rom 5:12–7:25).
- ❑ Cosmic powers hold human beings in bondage (Gal 4:3, 9; Col 2:8, 20; 1 Cor 15:24). In a sense, those under God’s good and holy law need to be delivered from it, as they resist it, break it, or use it in a misguided attempt to justify themselves (Rom 5:20, 10:4; 1 Cor 15:56; Gal 3:10–25).
- ❑ In a classic passage, Hebrews sums up the condition (from which Jesus delivered us) as a bondage to sin, the devil, death, and the fear of death (Heb 2:14–18).
- ❑ Luke uses Isaiah to portray our presalvation state as that of poverty, captivity, blindness, and oppression (Luke 4:18).
- ❑ Elsewhere this common state is called that of being “strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). It is the condition of those who live “in darkness and the shadow of death” (Luke 1:79; Col 1:13).





# The Agents of Salvation

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Human Deliverers  
and God the Savior

# Human Deliverers

- ❑ In a variety of ways human beings serve as agents of salvation.
  - ❑ Through an encounter with the risen Lord (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8) which he describes as “a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:12), Paul knows that he has been called to proclaim God’s Son “among the Gentiles” (Gal 1:16).
  - ❑ He is “eager” to visit Rome and preach “the Gospel” which is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith” (Rom 1:15–16; 1 Cor 1:18; 15:1–2). Paul’s missionary activity helps to bring about salvation (Rom 11:14). He lists the spiritual gifts which Christians “appointed” by God use in the saving service of others (1 Cor 12:28).
  - ❑ From the wider group of his disciples Jesus appoints “twelve” to preach and cast out demons (Mark 3:13–19 par.). They are sent out to preach, heal, and deliver people from diabolic powers (Mark 6:7–13 par.). In the post-resurrection situation “the eleven disciples” receive a missionary mandate to “make disciples of all nations” by bringing them baptism and the teaching of Jesus (Matt 28:16–20).
  - ❑ Acts describes the beginnings of the Church in Jerusalem and its outward movement which eventually brings Paul to Rome (Acts 28:15–31).
  - ❑ Through Peter and others, people receive salvation in the form of conversion, the forgiveness of sins, baptism, and the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38; 3:18–19; 5:31–32; 10:43–48).
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# God the Savior

- ❑ The NT applies the term “Savior” to God 8 times (for example, Luke 1:47; 1 Tim 1:1) and to Jesus 16 times (for example, Luke 2:11, John 4:42; Acts 13:23; Phil 3:20).
  - ❑ No one else is called “savior.” It is the same with *ruomai* (“to rescue” or “deliver”): when the agent of deliverance is named, it is always God (for example, Matt 27:43; 2 Cor 1:10; Col 1:13; 2 Pet 2:7) or Jesus (1 Thess 1:10).
  - ❑ Mary’s son is to be called “Jesus” (“God is salvation”), because he will save “his people from their sins” (Matt 1:21).
  - ❑ It is exclusively in the name of Jesus that salvation comes (Acts 2:38; 5:31): “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).
  - ❑ Through the crucified and risen Jesus comes the “forgiveness of sins” (Acts 13:38). Acts makes the universal and absolute claim that all, both Jews and gentiles, are to be “saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 15:11).
  - ❑ Explicit vocabulary of salvation, speaking both of “God our Savior who desires all men to be saved” (1 Tim 2:3–4; Titus 2:11) and “Christ Jesus” who “came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim 1:15). When “the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us ... through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:4, 6).
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# The Nature of Salvation

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The Synoptic Gospels present salvation in terms of “entering” the kingdom of God (Mark 10:23–26 par.), “accepting” it like a child (Mark 10:15 par.), or “sitting at table” in God’s kingdom (Luke 13:23–30 par.). Let us see what this entails.



# The Earthly Dimension

- ❑ Jesus' message of repentance calls on the financially secure to care for the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind (Luke 14:12–14).
  - ❑ The judgment to come encourages “all the nations” to attend now to the earthly needs of the hungry, strangers, the naked, the sick, and prisoners (Matt 25:31–46).
  - ❑ The present experience of salvation leads Zacchaeus to give half of his goods to the poor (Luke 19:8–10). Jesus invites a rich man to sell his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor (Mark 10:21–22).
  - ❑ Before Jesus begins his ministry, John the Baptist preaches a message of justice and aid for the needy (Luke 3:10–14).
  - ❑ After Jesus ascends into heaven, Jerusalem Christians share their wealth and take care of the poor (Acts 4:32–5:11).
  - ❑ In short, the NT version of salvation includes a practical concern here and now for needy people (Rom 12:8; 1 Cor 13:3; Heb 13:16; 1 John 3:17; Jas 1:27; 2:14–17).
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# The Spiritual Dimension

- ❑ In the Synoptic Gospels, through his words, deeds, and presence Jesus proclaims “the rule of God” and “the kingdom of heaven,” which are reverent circumlocutions for divine salvation.
  - ❑ He is “Emmanuel, which means ‘God with us’ ” (Matt 1:23), who calls people to change their way of life, believe in the good news, and enjoy a new relationship with God (Mark 1:15).
  - ❑ Jesus’ miracles not only physically heal men and women but also symbolize what he ultimately wants to do – namely, bring salvation to their whole person. He tells Bartimaeus, “Your faith has made you well” (Mark 10:52; see 5:34; Matt 9:22, Luke 7:50; 8:48).
  - ❑ A paralytic is healed, but the assurance “Your sins are forgiven” shows that the cure is spiritual as well as bodily (Mark 2:1–12).
  - ❑ Jesus proclaimed God’s compassion to those who were marginalized by respectable people: “I came not to call righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17 par.).
  - ❑ Tax collectors and other close collaborators with the occupying Roman army, women of bad reputation, tanners and those whose occupations made them ritually unclean, socially powerless and disadvantaged people, lepers, and others whom religion and society had left in some depressed condition found Jesus promising them happiness: “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20).
  - ❑ The day Pentecost fulfills the promise, “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21; 15:1, 11). Through conversion and baptism in the name of the crucified and risen Jesus, people are saved through the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38; 3:18–19; 5:31–32; 10:43ff.). Healings effected in the name of Jesus manifest the present reality of salvation (Acts 3:6; 4:9–10).
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# Future Salvation

- ❑ The Synoptics record Jesus' promise of eschatological salvation: "Whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel will save it" (Mark 8:35; 10:29–30). Those who persevere under persecution and suffering "will be saved" (Mark 13:13).
  - ❑ An eschatological discourse on the coming of the Son of Man lists various signs of the end and adds: "When these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28).
  - ❑ In his own case Paul is sure that sufferings will bring his "deliverance" (Phil 1:19). He tells the Philippians to look to the future: "Our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil 3:20).
  - ❑ He exhorts the Thessalonians to put on "for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:8–9; see also 1 Thess 1:10); the Romans are encouraged "to wake from sleep," since "salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed" (Rom 13:11).
  - ❑ This coming salvation will mean sharing in Christ's glory (Rom 8:17; 1 Cor 15:49–57; Phil 3:20–21). It will free from corruption the whole of creation; even in hoping for this fullness of redemption, believers already experience something of that full salvation (Rom 8:18–24).
  - ❑ Through suffering, Christ became "the pioneer" of human salvation (Heb 2:10).
  - ❑ It is at his second coming that he will "save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Heb 9:28).
  - ❑ The NT ends with the vision of that consummation of salvation when the Lord Jesus comes and God makes all things new (Rev 21:1–22:5).
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# The Mediation of Salvation

The classical NT statement on the universal mediation of salvation declares: “There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:5–6).

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# The Means of Salvation

- ❑ “God shows his love for us in what while we were, yet sinners Christ died for us ... if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life” (Rom 5:8–10).
  - ❑ “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:16–17).
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# The Source of Eternal Salvation

- ❑ Christ's obedience brought him to crucifixion, resurrection, and exaltation (Phil 2:8–9; Heb 5:8).
  - ❑ Through dying and rising he won the victory over “the principalities and powers” (Col 2:12–15).
  - ❑ Being thus “made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him” (Heb 5:9).
  - ❑ Christ's obedience brought “the free gift of righteousness” and “life for all men” (Rom 5:17–21).
  - ❑ He “was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Rom 4:25; see 1 Pet 1:18–19).
  - ❑ Through his blood Christ expiated human sin (Rom 3:25) and established a new covenant (Mark 14:24; 1 Cor 11:25).
  - ❑ Through his offering made once and for all (Heb 10:11–12), he entered into the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 9:11–12:24) and remains forever the living way into that sanctuary and to God (Heb 10:19–22).
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# References

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