

THEISM

God Is Our Savior

A savior is someone who rescues or delivers others from some sort of current crises or impending disaster. A savior may also be designated by such terms as deliverer or redeemer.

In scripture, God not only claims to be savior (Isaiah 43:3; 49:26; 60:16; Hosea 13:4), He claims to be the *only* savior (Isaiah 43:11; 45:21). God's role as savior relates to his love and care toward individuals for their seeking a righteous quality of life. More specifically, God saves people because they place their trust in him (Psalm 22:4-5), because they seek him (Psalm 34:4; 81:7), and because they walk blamelessly (Psalm 28:18). God saves those who have a contrite heart (Psalm 34:18), who have an upright heart (Psalm 7:10), whose ways are righteous (Proverbs 11:9, 21), and who turn away from their wickedness (Jeremiah 4:14).

The Old Testament presents God as savior primarily in the political and military life of the nation of Israel. Human beings were sometimes designated as savior or deliverer, but they were such only because they operated as agents of God. God often saved his people by raising up deliverers "who saved them from the hand of their enemies" (Nehemiah 9:27). Although Moses led the Israelites, God was the one who saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians (Exodus 14:30; Psalms 106:7-8; Jude 25). During the conquest of Canaan, God delivered the enemies of Israel into their hands (Numbers 21:3, 34; Deuteronomy 2:33, 36; 3:2-3; Joshua 2:24; 10:8, 12, 19, 30, 32; 11:8; 21:44; 24:11; 1 Chronicles 5:20). After the Israelites settled in the land of Canaan, God raised up judges who delivered the Israelites from their oppressors (Judges 2:16, 18; 3:9-10; 3:28; 7:9; 8:34; 10:12; 11:21; 11:32; 12:3; 1 Samuel 10:18; 12:11). During the period of the united monarchy, God saved Israel on numerous occasions. When King Saul went to fight against the Philistines, God "saved Israel that day" (1 Samuel 14:23, 48). In the northern kingdom of Israel, "the Lord saved them (Israel) by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash" (2 Kings 14:27, see also 2 Chronicles 24:24). In the southern kingdom of Judah, "The LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria" (2 Chronicles 32:22). When the Israelites returned from Babylonian captivity, on their journey "the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambush along the road" (Ezra 8:31).

In the Old Testament, many considered God their savior (such as David, 2 Samuel 22:3-4, and Darius; Daniel 6:27) and ascribed their salvation to him (Deuteronomy 33:29; Psalm 44:7; 80:3,7,19; 106:8; 10; Isaiah 63:9). Moreover, through the prophets, God called upon the people to look to him for their salvation (Isaiah 45:22; Joel 2:32). God wanted Israel to know that he was their savior (Judges 7:2).

The New Testament also applies the term savior directly to God (Luke 1:47; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4) although now the term also comes to be associated with the person and activity of Christ. Even before his birth Jesus was designated as savior. Joseph was informed that the forthcoming child of his betrothed would "save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). When Jesus was born, angels informed shepherds that "there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11). Jesus claimed to be savior. He said, "the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost" (Matthew 18:11), "the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" (Luke 9:56), and "I did not

come to judge the world but to save the world” (John 12:47). Moreover, the apostles declared that Jesus is savior (Acts 4:12; Ephesians 5:23; Philippians 3:20; 2 Timothy 1:10; 2:10; Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6; 2 Peter 1:1, 11; 2 Peter 2:20; 3:2; 3:18). Even so, God is the primary savior. The salvation wrought by Jesus Christ the Son of God originated from God the Father (John 3:16-17; 6:37-40; Acts 5:31; 13:23; 28:28; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Philippians 1:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; Titus 2:11; 1 John 4:9-10, 14; 5:11; Revelation 7:10; 19:1).

The New Testament presents God as savior primarily in the redemption of mankind from the eternal consequences of sin. The sin of Adam brought death to everyone (Romans 5:12; 6:23). Sin also estranged Adam from God. Sin separates people from God (Isaiah 59:2). Since people have spiritual bodies as well as physical bodies (Ecclesiastes 12:7), everyone will come before God in judgment (Acts 17:31; Romans 14:10; Hebrews 9:27) to account for things done in their bodies (2 Corinthians 5:10). Some will receive eternal condemnation, while others will receive everlasting life (Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 16:19-31; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:10-15). Jesus said, “do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). Therefore, everyone needs salvation from the eternal consequences of sin. Reconciliation is needful to overcome man’s estrangement from God.

God saves by making reconciliation possible. He does so by requiring sacrifice. Animal sacrifices, however, cannot take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). Man is redeemed from sin only by the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:12-14; 1 Peter 1:17-19), which was shed on the cross (Matthew 26:28; Philippians 2:8; 1 Peter 1:18-19). Christ sacrificed himself for our sins (Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 9:26) to reconcile us to God (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

God saves because God is gracious (Titus 2:11; 1 John 4:9-10). Even so, God’s grace is not cheap. It cost the death of his son on the cross to pay for our sins. Although God wants everyone to be saved (2 Peter 3:9), his grace of eternal salvation is not universal. It is for those who believe (Acts 16:31; Romans 1:16; Hebrews 11:6), who confess that Jesus is the Christ (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:10; 1 Timothy 6:12), who repent of their sins (Acts 2:38; 2 Peter 3:9), and who are baptized (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

God’s salvation has always been conditioned upon people being obedient and faithful (John 14:15; 15:2; Hebrews 11:6; 1 Peter 1:14; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 9). Many times the Israelites forsook the Lord (Judges 2:12-13; 10:6; 1 Kings 9:9; 1 Samuel 10:19; 2 Kings 21:22). When Israel turned away from God, he forsook them and allowed them to become enslaved by others. The Israelites would then cry to God in their distress and he would deliver them (Psalms 106:43; 107:6, 20). Just as the Israelites often turned away from God and were therefore rejected by God, so also people sometimes now turn away from God’s saving grace (Galatians 5:4; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; Hebrews 3:12) and are rejected (Revelation 2:20-22). However, whenever people turn back to God, salvation is renewable (Jeremiah 29:13-14; Acts 8:22; James 4:8; 1 John 2:1). A salvation principle by which God operates is, “The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you” (2 Chronicles 15:2, see also 2 Chronicles 24:20). Therefore, to be saved by God, seek him (1 Chronicles 16:11; 22:19; Psalm 105:4; Isaiah 55:6; Amos 5:6; Zephaniah 2:3) and faithfully serve him always.