

## Salvation in Jesus Christ: The Bible's Central Message

*The teaching about Jesus Christ and the salvation that God in His love has prepared in Christ is the central message of the Bible. Man is saved alone by grace, through faith, on the merits of Christ. Only faith in Christ justifies man and makes him acceptable to God (John 20:31; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:8).—(LLC Position Statement, Section 1, Item 4)*

### ***What Is the Central Message in the Bible?***

The main message in the Bible is Jesus Christ and salvation through Him. To many, this essential truth has been lost over the course of time. Already in the time of Jesus, the Pharisees sought justification for their own righteousness in the words of Scripture. In Luther's time, the Catholic Church viewed the Bible in the light of a doctrine of faith tied to good works. Today, the danger of losing sight of the Bible's message lies in mankind's rational approach to examining issues. On one hand, some radical scholars reject the divine dimension of the Bible, and approach it as the product of human design. On the other hand, some approach the Bible from the opposite end of the spectrum, ignoring the historical perspective and using a strictly literal interpretation. Both methods obscure the perspective of salvation history.

### ***Christ Is the Center of Salvation History***

The Pharisees could not see that the promise of salvation in the coming Messiah was the main message in the Old Testament. Jesus told them, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). When we look at Scripture with this in mind, we use the so-called salvation historical view. This means that God's plan to save mankind is the common thread of the Bible. God promised the Messiah through the Old Testament Law and Prophets, and fulfilled His plan by becoming true man, born of the Virgin Mary, suffering and dying under Pontius Pilate, rising on the third day, and ascending to heaven, whence He shall come on the last day to judge the world (Luke 24:27, 24:44; John 1:45, 5:46; Acts 10:43).

### ***The Bible's Message Revealed to Luther***

During Luther's time, the main message of the Bible was lost in the teachings of the Catholic Church, which taught that salvation was attained by a combination of faith and good works. After his conversion, Luther finally understood that a merciful God is to be found without one's own merits, and that the central message of the Bible is salvation alone by grace, alone by faith, and alone through the merits of Christ. We agree with Luther's statement: "Christ is the Lord and the King of the Bible" (John 6:35, 8:12).

### ***God's Revelation Goes beyond Our Human Mind***

Bible scholars study how the books of the Bible came about, what the original words meant to the listeners in Jesus' time, and the historical circumstances in which the Scriptures were written. Information produced by this research can be beneficial to us, since it can open windows of understanding to the rich original message of the Bible. However, some scholars hold the human mind as the highest source of truth, and thus place human reason above faith. They question the fundamental teachings of the Bible, especially the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and salvation through Him, and hold these beliefs as bound to time. They hold love and social justice as the principal areas of focus rather than the message of redemption and salvation in Christ. Their approach has been that of the tempter in Paradise when he asked: "Has God really said so?" (Gen. 3:1). Through faith we see Jesus Christ as the main message of the Bible, and thank God for salvation through Him (Ps. 8:4,5; Acts 1:8, 3:20).

### ***All Scripture Must Be Interpreted in the Light of Christ's Salvation Work***

The Bible includes ceremonial and dietary laws, which were given to the people of Israel in the Old Covenant. But even these instructions must be looked at in the light of Christ Jesus and the Bible's main message of salvation through Him. Apostle Paul writes, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10:4). He also says that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17). In God's kingdom we endeavor to listen to what the Spirit says in the congregation. The Spirit reveals the gospel message. As a believer of this message, a child of God also desires to listen to the instructions of love from His congregation.

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