

Jesus' Accomplishment of Salvation



This doctrine describes what Jesus did in order to save us from sin and give us eternal life with God.

Jesus accomplished our salvation by becoming a man, by suffering and dying for us, and by raising us to new life in and with him. His work of salvation began in eternity when he purposed with his Father to accomplish our redemption. In his incarnation, he brought the promise of salvation into the world. The substance of his earthly ministry was to proclaim this salvation, both by his teaching and by his actions, including his many miracles. Those who recognized what he was doing and who worshiped him as Savior were told that they were “saved” (Mark 16:16), even before his death and resurrection, because they believed the promise that he brought with him.

The key moment in Jesus’ earthly life

was his agony in the garden of Gethsemane on the night before he was crucified. There he repeated in human form what he had already done in heaven—he submitted to his Father’s will and accepted the suffering and death which that entailed.

After his death, Jesus descended to “hell,” the place of disobedient spirits and the home of Satan. By this act he invaded the kingdom of darkness and rebellion against God, destroying its power and setting those who had been captured by it free. He then returned to earth in a resurrected body, showed himself to his disciples and prepared them for his ascension into heaven. Once in heaven, he presented his sacrifice to the Father and sat down at the Father’s right hand, where he serves as an advocate for believers (1 John 2:1).

The theological heart of Christ’s saving work is his death on the cross, where he made “atonement” for our sins—the payment that reconciles us to the Father and puts us “at one” with him. On the cross, Jesus took our sins on himself, and paid the price for them by his death, so that those who believe in him and trust in his work on their behalf are saved through him rather than by anything we may achieve or perform.

The scope of Christ’s accomplishment of salvation is debated among theologians. Some emphasize that Christ accomplished salvation equally for all and

that the extent is only limited by the application of salvation exclusively to believers. Others emphasize that salvation is entirely of God, and if Jesus fully intended to save someone, that person will in fact be saved. Part of this difference is a genuine divergence over how to interpret the biblical evidence and part of it is a matter of perspective and emphasis. If we say that Jesus died for *sins*, we must confess that his atonement was in some way universal, in the sense that there is no sin that is too great for his death to have covered it. Nobody can claim to be beyond the saving *mercy* of God because their evil is somehow greater than his *grace*. But if we say that Jesus died for *sinners*, then there is always some sense in which his atoning work is restricted, because (except for a small minority of universalists) Christians have taught that only those who believe the *gospel* will be saved ([Mark 16:16](#); [John 3:16](#)).

Finally, whether (and to what extent) Jesus' accomplishment of salvation applies to those who are not Christians or outside the church is a matter of controversy. Biblically, it can be said that whatever plan for non-Christians may be hidden in the mind of God, no one can come to the Father except in and through Christ the Son. Sooner or later, somehow or other, everyone who wishes to be saved must find their way to, and be found in *union with*, Jesus Christ, the only Savior and Mediator.

Passages

KEY VERSES

[Is 53:1–12](#); [Lk 1:68–79](#); [Jn 3:16–21](#); [Jn 12:44–50](#); [Ac 4:8–12](#); [Ro 5:1–19](#); [Ga 3:10–14](#); [Heb 3:1–4:16](#); [Heb 9:11–10:18](#); [Re 19:11–16](#)