

Jesus Saves! But How?

Understanding the doctrine of the atonement, Part 3

By Michael Cheuk

Jesus Saves! But How?

Brief review

The “Objective” Model

- The death of Christ has an objective purpose: it upholds God’s honor or justice or it appeases God’s anger and wrath

The “Objective” Model

- “God-ward” focus – the work of Christ primarily addresses a necessary demand of God (honor, justice, punishment, etc.)
- Christ as “Priest” – who offers Himself as a sacrifice, a substitute to meet God’s demand
- Terms: justification (declared right), propitiation (appease or satisfy God’s wrath), expiation (removal of guilt)

The “Objective” Model

- Penal Substitution Model - It uses a juridical/legal model to understand how Jesus saves us. Jesus bears the punishment of God against human sin.

The “Subjective” Model

- The life and death of Christ is designed first and foremost to effect a change in human subjects—to change their hearts, to heal their brokenness, to adopt them as children of God the Father

The “Subjective” Model

- “Human-ward” focus – the work of Christ primarily consists of demonstrating to the world the amazing depth of God’s love for humanity. God does not need to be appeased. Sinful, hardened human hearts need to be reconciled to God.

The “Subjective” Model

- Christ as “Prophet” or Teacher – who teaches and demonstrates the depth of God’s love that moves sinners

to repent and love God

- Terms: reconciliation (restore relationship), revelatory (reveal God's love), family-adoption

The "Subjective" Model

- Moral Example Model – the true value of Jesus' life and death is to be found in the fact that it offers us a perfect example of the self-sacrificial dedication to God.

The "Classical" Model

- Jesus' life, death and resurrection brought about God's victory over Satan and all powers of evil

The "Classical" Model

- "Satan-ward" focus – the work of Christ consists of defeating the power of Satan and liberating human beings from the bondage of evil powers in the world.

The "Classical" Model

- Christ as "King" – who ushers in a new Kingdom, that triumphs over the tyrannical evil powers of the world that has kept humanity in bondage
- Terms: victory, triumph, liberation, redemption

The "Classical" Model

- Christus Victor Model – sees the work of Christ the Victor primarily in terms of his conflict and triumph over those elements of the kingdom of darkness that hold humanity in its clutches.

How do these models relate to one another?

Rethinking "salvation"

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- Salvation is not just “going to heaven”

Rethinking “salvation”

- Salvation is God’s mysterious work of restoring our broken relationships with
 - God
 - Self
 - Others
 - The World

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- Salvation is living fully into the Story that God had originally intended for His world.
- “Story” is not some “make-believe” tale, but it is one of the most important ways that we make sense of our identity, our lives and our world.

Rethinking “salvation”

- Suppose you and I are reading the same novel and that as we discuss it, we find that we have different views of what the author had in mind. You read it as a story filled with immoralities that the author will have to get out of the narrative if she's to avoid a tragic ending for her characters: I read it as moving toward a happy conclusion even if those imperfections remain in the story to the (non-bitter) end. What do I do to convince you that my reading is the better one?

Rethinking "salvation"

- I recapitulate the story – I retell the story. I recount all the rough places and failures and immoralities, but I show how the author's later developments make them smooth without once whitewashing their roughness. I recount for you everything you've added up as disaster and present you with a new total that adds up to triumph. In other words, I go over the same ground we've both covered in the book, but I re-speak it all in the light of its reconciling ending.

Rethinking "salvation"

- Recapitulation does not go back over the story and remove events or people who no longer square with where the author now wants to go with her plot. She doesn't change what's already happened. For both author and reader, the inconveniences of the story must remain inconveniences to the end. If they are to be seen as not counting in the last analysis, it must be not because they're discounted but because they are recounted in such a way that their tragedies, without ceasing to be tragic, are converted into amazing grace.

Rethinking "salvation"

- STAR WARS – it is the story of Anakin Skywalker. A story of his triumphs, but also of his failures, his immoralities and his imperfection.

Rethinking "salvation"

- Anakin, as a child, faced a future with no prospects, because he and his mother were slaves.

Rethinking "salvation"

- Anakin's mother was killed when he was a youth.

Rethinking "salvation"

- In the midst of one battle, Anakin loses a hand, and has an artificial, mechanical hand to replace the lost one.

Rethinking "salvation"

- Anakin, in his desire to save his beloved (his wife Padme) and to save the Republic, succumbs to temptation to join the dark side and becomes Darth Vader.

Rethinking "salvation"

- Anakin, has a son, Luke Skywalker, who in some ways recapitulates or retells his father's story.

Rethinking "salvation"

- Luke, as a child, faced a future with no prospects, because he was stuck with his uncle and aunt on an out-of-the-way desert planet. His uncle and aunt were the only "parents" he knew.

Rethinking "salvation"

- Luke's uncle and aunt were killed when he was a youth.

Rethinking "salvation"

- In the midst of one battle, Luke loses a hand, and has an artificial, mechanical hand to replace the lost one.

Show Video

- Star Wars Episode VI: "The Return of the Jedi"
- Chapters 41, 43 and 46

Rethinking "salvation"

- Luke, while fighting Vader, desires to save his beloved (his sister Leia) and to save the Republic, BUT he does NOT succumb to temptation to join the dark side.

Rethinking "salvation"

- Instead Luke offers salvation to his father, Darth Vader,

who accepts his son's plea to come back to the "Light" side.

Rethinking "salvation"

- As a result, the Emperor is defeated and the Republic is saved.

Rethinking "salvation"

- If we only had Episodes I to V, how would we categorize the story of Anakin Skywalker? A story of failure and of tragedy? Or a story of salvation?

Rethinking "salvation"

- But if we include Episode VI, how would we now categorize the story of Anakin Skywalker? A story of failure and of tragedy? Or a story of salvation?

Rethinking "salvation"

- That is an example of recapitulation. Anakin Skywalker's story of salvation is not complete until we see the end of the story. We cannot just take individual episodes from Anakin's life to get the full meaning of his life and story.

Rethinking "salvation"

- Luke's "reliving" the life of his father, but in a "good" way radically affects how Anakin's life story ends, which then recasts a whole new meaning and a whole new light upon the whole life of Anakin Skywalker.

Jesus is Savior

- In a similar way, the whole "life" of Jesus—from His existence as the creating Word of God in Genesis, to his birth, circumcision, baptism, temptation, teaching, healing, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and rule as King—retells and recasts a whole new meaning to the story of the Bible and of the world.

Jesus is Savior

- In Exodus, God made a covenant with His people, by the giving of the Law (Exodus 20), together with blessings when the law is upheld and curses if the law was not upheld (Deut. 27-28).
- Throughout the history of God's people (Israel), we have not upheld God's law and we fall under God's judgment.

Jesus is Savior

- Jesus is both the embodiment and the Perfect Fulfiller of God's law. Because of Jesus' obedience, we as God's people are saved.
- Jesus represents the New Israel, faithful and obedient to God.
- As such, Jesus is our Moral Example to live the life that God had intended for us. (Moral Example)

Jesus is Savior

- Throughout the OT, the people of God has offered sacrifices to God, shedding the blood of innocent animals in order to appease God.
- But sacrifices had to be offered again and again by the High Priest.

Jesus is Savior

- On the cross, Jesus is seen as both the Perfect High Priest and the Sinless Sacrifice Lamb offered once and for all, for all the sins of humanity.
- Jesus represents the Perfect Human Being (the New Adam) who is our substitute in bearing the punishment for sin. (Substitution Model)

Jesus is Savior

- Because of Jesus' perfect obedience and his perfect sacrifice, Jesus attained the victory of the powers of evil

and lifted up as King of all creation. (Christus Victor Model)

Jesus is Savior

- Many Christians believe that we are saved by what Jesus said or did, when in truth we're saved by Who He Is – by the Person of the Word of God Incarnate.
- We do not profess our faith in the things Jesus said, or even in the deeds He performed. Therefore it's Who He IS, not just stuff he says or does, that redeems the world.

Jesus is Savior

- He's the Word in the beginning that spoke all creation into being.
- He's the lamb whose blood was applied to the door mantles of the Hebrew people so that death 'passes over' those household.
- He's the true and better Moses who delivers His people from bondage & sin

Jesus is Savior

- He's the true and better David, the true heir of the Davidic throne and the King of Israel
- He's the Savior of the world in his Incarnation: his pure and hidden presence in Mary's womb delivers us into new life.
- In his Circumcision, the whole world has been made Jewish.

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Jesus is Savior

- In Jesus' Baptism, every creature is baptized.
- In His Fasting and Temptation, all the hunger and all the "testing" of the human race is summed up
- In His Agony at the Cross and Passion, all our anguish is present.

Jesus is Savior

- In his Death and Burial, Jesus accompanies everyone's death to the grave.
- In His Resurrection, all humanity rises
- In His Ascension, we all go to the Father
- In the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit comes upon every child of Adam and Eve.

The Tree

- At the beginning of this story, there was a tree in a garden that was part of the original "Fall" of humanity, that cursed all of creation and led to death.

The Tree

- In the middle of this story, there is a tree that Jesus hangs on in order to usher in a whole new Kingdom
- (Acts 10:39-40) We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear

The Tree

- At the end of this story, there is a tree of life in the new city of Jerusalem that will bring blessing and healing.

The Tree

- (Rev 22:2-3) On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him;
- (Rev 22:14) Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates.

- Jesus IS our Savior, from the very beginning of time to the culmination of history. He is the One in the story of the world Who makes things right.

QUESTION:

- Will we join in Jesus' story, so that IN CHRIST, our story too will be one of wholeness, victory and salvation, rather than a story of failures, immoralities and tragedy?