

Class and Connect Group Discussion (Episode #1)

1. Do you suppose the average person on the street might explain Christianity like NT Wright indicated, as "going to heaven when you die"? Give examples that reinforce this view from your experience (with songs, funerals, camp, gospel preaching, teaching, etc.) In your view, discuss with one another how this understanding of Christianity is:

- on-point
- oversimplified
- in need of correction
- troubling

2. In what ways is the "kingdom of heaven" the same or different from "heaven"? What is Jesus telling us when he teaches us to pray "may your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven"? (Matt 6:9-13)

3. Trying to bring in little or no previous teaching or conditioning, from the following passages, what might you conclude "saved" or "salvation" means?

What are we saved from? What are we saved for? (There's more here than you can get to today. Read the passages on your own this week.)

- Zacchaeus - Luke 19:1-10
- Sick woman - Matthew 9:20-22
- Blind man - Luke 18:40-43
- The Day of Pentecost - Acts 2:14-40
- Peter and John Before Sanhedrin - Acts 4:1-22
- The Jailor - Acts 16:25-34
- Rom 10:9-10
- Eph 2:1-10
- Titus 3:3-8



SAVED!

THINKING THROUGH
SALVATION TOGETHER

CURRENT SERMON SERIES

Saved! Thinking Through Salvation Together (June 9, 2024)

Goals for this series:

- To consider our understanding of the Biblical story, including its continuity, and coherence as a whole.
- To challenge and strengthen the “framework” through which we have viewed salvation (the future, heaven, hell, kingdom of God, and the gospel)
- To grow in our confidence in the gospel story and our conviction to actively share our faith with others.
- To get a clearer vision of the end goal so that our day-to-day discipleship is also clearer.

Excerpts from NT Wright – Episode 1 – How Should We Define Salvation?

We are going to look at this wonderful word, “Salvation” and put it in its larger Biblical framework.

What’s Christianity all about? And they would say, “Salvation.” “What exactly do you mean by salvation?” They would look a bit surprised and say, “Well you know, going to heaven when you die, stuff like that.”

When people say they believe in Christianity, this is often the primary thing they mean. And when people say they don’t believe in Christianity, the primary thing they don’t believe about Christianity is about people going to heaven when they die.

But going to heaven is, oddly, not, apparently, the subject of the OT, or the NT. Many people just assume it is and so read all sorts of things in the Bible as though that is what it is saying. But actually, again and again in both Old and New Testaments, the point is not how do humans find their way to heaven, but how does the God of Heaven come to dwell with us for us or amongst us. Again and again, that’s as it were, the direction of travel.

So, what does salvation mean when we put it in that larger framework?

One understanding of salvation – “It’s about going to heaven when we die.” There might be something wrong with this escapist vision that says, “Let’s get out of here and go somewhere nicer.”

2nd understanding of salvation – Some have said, “it’s not about heaven, it is about making the world better now. Not pie in the sky when you die.”

Early Christians would talk about Jesus himself. Jesus is the focal point that explains in words and deeds what life is all about. Jesus talked about people being saved. Often, he is talking about a person being healed. Salvation on Jesus’ own lips is more than something after this life, it includes God doing things in the present time, rescuing the situation.

*Jesus doesn’t talk about salvation as the primary thing, but he talks about the Kingdom of God. Jesus teaches us to pray. **10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**” About heaven coming to earth, not earthlings going to heaven. How does this work? How does it bring about the salvation of which Jesus spoke?*

The kingdom of God does include God’s ultimate purpose which transcends death. God’s ultimate purpose for a new world, in which, however we die, God is going to give us a new life forever. That’s there, but it needs to be thought through.

Likewise, because it is about Jesus talking about God’s kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven, though that is there as well. Because earth needs to be rescued from so many things. And ultimately, we are told that will happen when Jesus comes again to complete his work that he began in his public career. But when we think about what it means to be saved, we’ve got a more complicated map than we might have imagined when we started out.

Jeff’s Reflections

1. Doesn’t salvation mean going to heaven when we die? If not, what does it mean?
2. What is the larger Biblical framework or story that is important to understand?
3. Key Idea: It is not how humans find their way into heaven, but how the God of heaven comes to dwell for and among us.
- **We have often gotten the direction of travel incorrect.**
4. There are many definitions of salvation. Which ones most fully honor the story of Scripture?

Key Passage: Matt 6:9-10 - ... **on earth as it is in heaven.**