

Is it an Elephant or is it Salvation? – Isaiah 12:1-6

I. Introduction:

- A. If you've **never heard** the ancient Indian story about the **blind men** and the **elephant**, I will correct your lack of education right now.
1. A group of blind men were told that a strange animal, called an "**elephant**," had been brought to their town.
 - a. Not only had they never seen an elephant, but they had never even heard of one.
 - b. Out of curiosity, they said: "**We would like to investigate this creature.**"
 - c. So, they sought it out, and when they found it they put their hands and fingers on it, while the patient elephant permitted their investigation.
 2. The first man, putting his hand on the **trunk**, said, "**This elephant is nothing new, it is only a thick snake.**"
 3. One of the others first grabbed its **ear**, declaring that it seemed like a kind of leaf fan.
 4. A third man, whose hand was upon its **leg**, said, the elephant is a pillar – like a tree-trunk.
 5. The blind man who placed his hand upon its **belly** said the elephant is a wall.
 6. Another who felt its **tail**, describing it as a rope.
 7. And the last man felt its **tusk**, and declared that an elephant is hard and smooth like a spear.
 8. Of course they were all correct – or at least they were partially correct.
- B. Without intending to do so, over the last month, I've lead you to touch God's salvation in different ways.
1. Several messages have interlocked with our Sunday School lessons giving us a blind theologian's view of salvation.
 2. In our 10:00 class we have been looking at various doctrinal aspects of salvation – grace, justification, atonement, regeneration and so on – each different, but together they are part of the whole.
 3. During that time we've had a morning message on the **uncommon, common salvation**.
 4. Before that, and as well as after that, we looked at **Simeon's** perspective of salvation as "**consolation**," and then **Anna's** desire for "**redemption**."
 5. Last Sunday I tried to show you that it might be best to consider salvation as **the Person** of the **Saviour**.
 6. And **with** every one of those messages, I tried to show you **even other ways** to look at salvation.
- C. About a month ago, I pointed to what is obvious – there is **much error** being taught about salvation.
1. There is error about its **source** – because it began in eternity past in the heart of the eternal God.
 2. It didn't begin at Calvary, and it certainly doesn't have its source in the sinner's yearning for forgiveness.
 3. As I tried to say last week, there are errors about the **nature of salvation**.
 4. And tying several messages together, there are errors in regard to salvation's **purpose – God's glory**.
 - a. "**Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.**"
 - b. "**Man was created to worship, serve and glorify God.**"
 5. That is something we cannot do until we are regenerated – "**quicken**" – made spiritual alive through salvation.
- D. This morning I'd like to deal with three aspects of **salvation's PERSPECTIVE**.
1. Despite looking in different directions, there isn't error in any of them.
 2. Each of those blind men were correct, but they needed to bring their differing perspectives together.
 3. There are many Christians who look too longingly at one of salvation's perspective, ignoring the other two.
 4. There are others who deny one perspective, and in so doing they twist the other two.
 5. These can be serious mistake, because it hurts our ability to serve and glorify Christ our Saviour.
- E. Salvation has a **past tense**, a **future tense** and a **present tense**.
1. From where we stand, we can look back at the **eternal seed** of salvation, or forward to the **completion** of salvation.
 2. But perhaps more important than either of those is the salvation of today – this present moment.

3. I say it may be more important because how we look at your salvation right now affects our ability to worship the Saviour, and whether or not we can bring the Lord the glory which He is due.
4. It's like the ability to see.
 - a. Perfect sight involves both the ability to focus on things up close to the face & far away into the distance
 - b. Sometimes that distant mountain is bathed in the light of the sunrise.
 - c. And sometimes it is a silhouette as the sun drops down behind it.

II. At times the Bible looks back toward the **ROOTS** of our redemption – and so should we.

- A. The **Apostle John** in speaking of our Saviour says in **1 Jn. 4:19** – *“We love him, because he **FIRST** loved us.”*
 1. When did God first begin to love the people whom He has saved? When did he begin to love you?
 - a. It wasn't when you were laid on your mother's breast, moments after you were born.
 - b. And it wasn't nine months earlier, when you were a living child within your mother's womb.
 - c. God didn't begin to love you when He saw you take pity on your bullied neighbor.
 - d. It wasn't when you started going to church, and you sang your heart out with some childish chorus.
 - e. In fact it wasn't at **any point during** your life.
 2. **John** hints at the subject ten verses earlier when he wrote – *“**HEREIN** is love, **not** that we loved God, but that **he loved us**, and sent his Son to be the propitiation – the satisfaction – for our sins.”*
 3. And **Paul**, looking back, not at the mountain itself, but at the foothills in front of it said in **Ephesians 2** –
 - a. *“You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*
 - b. *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*
 - c. *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*
 - d. **But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,**
 - e. *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*
 - f. *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*
- B. **Why** did our Saviour **choose to die to save us** when we were children of disobedience and sin?
 1. The Bible says that it was **His choice** from before the beginning of creation.
 2. Let me share just two scriptures out of many.
 3. There is Paul's statement in his **Epistle to the Ephesians** – please turn to **Ephesians 1:3**.
 - a. *“We love God because He first loved us...”*
 4. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*
 - a. *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*
 - b. *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*
 - c. *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”*
- C. Before we move to my second point, please notice how that paragraph ends.
 1. It is with a finger pointed toward God's reason for creating us.
 2. What is man's ultimate purpose? *“Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.”*
 3. And to that end, *“God (the) Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (saved us)... to the **praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”***
- D. God's determination in eternity past to breathe into the nostrils of your first father the breath of life, and then to later regenerate you after Adam's spiritual death, should be the corner stone of your glory and praise to God.
 1. As **Peter** said, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*
 2. *To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,*

3. *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*
4. *“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.”*

E. One important perspective that we should all have toward salvation should look back – far back into eternity.

III. But admittedly, the most common perspective on salvation looks toward the **FUTURE**.

- A. There are many scriptures which put salvation into the future, because that is where it **ends** – or **never ends**.
1. For example, **Paul** exhorts the Christians in **Rome** – *“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”*
 2. Because *“the night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”*
 3. *“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for **now** is our **salvation nearer than when we believed.**”*
 4. Some of the saints in Rome had been saved for decades, others for years, and some only months.
 - a. But with each passing day, they were all 24 hours closer to seeing their Saviour face to face.
 - b. With each passing day they had fewer hours to spend serving and bringing honor to Christ in this world.
 5. There are aspects to salvation which can be fully enjoyed only after we leave this earthly life and join our Saviour in glorified bodies.
 6. But if God **only wanted THAT** for His children, then He would take us to Himself immediately upon our salvation.
 7. The Lord has work for us to do in this world, or He wouldn't have left us here.
- B. Earlier, **Paul** wrote to his believing friends in **Thessalonica**, exhorting them – *“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober...”*
1. *Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.*
 - a. *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, **but to OBTAIN salvation** by our Lord Jesus Christ,*
 - b. *Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*
 - c. *Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”*
 2. Every born again child of God can take comfort in the fact that the completion of salvation is coming soon.
 3. The writer of **Hebrews** said to those he described as **“heirs of salvation”** – *“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him **shall he appear the second time without sin UNTO salvation.**”*
 4. There is a salvation coming.
- C. And in **First Peter** again – *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*
1. *To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,*
 - a. *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*
 - b. *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:*
 - c. *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*
 - d. *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: **Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.**”*
 2. Christian, are you currently in **“heaviness through manifold temptations”** as Peter suggests?
 3. Is your faith under trial through persecution, penury or pestilence? Take comfort – **“consolation.”**
 4. Jesus Christ will soon return for you, and then you will *“receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”*

- D. Of course, I am not **condemning** your thoughts about **heaven**.
1. In fact, we probably should spend more time than we do thinking about eternity with the Lord.
 - a. *“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”*
 - b. *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”*
 2. We all may have loved ones with the Lord, whom we are anxious to see.
 3. And it will be highly enjoyable to spend time with Simeon, Anna, Joseph, Nehemiah and other Bible saints.
 4. The architecture of our future city and the mansions Christ is preparing for us are currently beyond our imaginations.
 5. And then there will be the joy of looking into the manly, middle-eastern face of our Saviour.
 6. It is okay to spend a few leisure hours contemplating, and even meditating on, where God in His salvation will take you in the future.
 7. But if you neglect our last perspective, you are going to miss the purpose for your newborn existence.

IV. The most important aspect of your salvation involves **TODAY** – this very moment.

- A. I say it is the most important, because this is the only time over which we have any real control.
1. Why is that significant?
 2. Remember, what is man’s ultimate purpose?
 3. *“Man’s chief end is to glorify God now, and then to enjoy Him forever.”*
- B. Think back to last week’s message – **Salvation** is to be found in the person of **the Lord Jesus**.
1. It is not just what Christ accomplished on the cross, or in the sprinkling of His blood on the Mercy Seat.
 2. The presence of Christ and His Spirit is the essence of salvation.
 3. *“Zacchaeus, this day is salvation come to your house.”*
- C. Again, what are some of the **elephantine parts of salvation**?
1. We could talk about justification, atonement, regeneration, propitiation, adoption, reconciliation and so on.
 2. Even though the blessings of these points will go on for ever, **not one** of them **begins at our death** or at **the revelation** of the Son of God in glory.
 3. The Bible doesn’t say a word about saints be **born again** or **adopted** into God’s family when they die.
 - a. **Romans 8:15** – *“For ye **HAVE** not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye **have received** the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”*
 - b. **Galatians 4** – *“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because **YE ARE SONS**, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore **THOU ART** no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”*
 4. As many as received the Messiah by faith *“to them **GAVE** he power to become the sons of God even to them that believe on his name.”*
 5. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he **IS** a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* – new family, new Father, new purpose, new life.
- D. Is **justification** some future benefit for the children of God?
1. No it is not. It is as real and as practical today as the clothes you are wearing.
 2. *“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man (Jesus Christ) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him **all that believe ARE justified** from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”*
 3. **Paul** told the **Romans**, *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”*
 - a. But **you have been** **“JUSTIFIED** freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
 - b. *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.”*

4. Christ Jesus *“was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore **being justified by faith, we HAVE peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**”*
 5. As people who **were dead** in trespasses and sins, but who have been **declared righteous** through the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, it is now **our OBLIGATION to LIVE in the light of these BLESSINGS.**
- E. What is man’s ultimate purpose? *“Man’s chief end is to glorify God **NOW**, and then to enjoy Him **FOREVER.**”*
- F. We could spend a few minutes looking at each aspect of this huge creature – this salvation by grace.
1. We could talk about propitiation, reconciliation, conversion, sanctification and fellowship, pointing out that every one of them is a **current blessing** with **future consummation.**
 2. *“In (Christ) **we HAVE obtained** a (future) inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

 - a. *That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*
 - b. *In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, **ye WERE sealed** with that holy Spirit of promise,*
 - c. *Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” – **Ephesians 1:11.****
 3. As Christians we have been converted to Christ.
 - a. We are not the same people we were prior to our faith in the Lord.
 - b. And as such we are commissioned and enabled to bring glory to our Saviour.
- G. Last week we looked at **Exodus 15 – Moses’ Psalm of praise** to God for the blessings of the exodus.
1. I know that Moses was not thinking of eternal salvation in the same way we are this morning.
 2. But his thoughts were certainly running parallel to ours – we can learn of our salvation by thinking about his
 3. In his exuberance he makes a statement which we should implement.
 4. *“The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and **I will prepare him an HABITATION; my father’s God, and I will exalt him.**”*
 5. What is this *“habitation”* to which he refers?
 6. **Exodus 15:2** – is ten chapters away from God’s command to build the Tabernacle.
 7. I don’t think for a moment Moses was thinking about a temple or a royal tent for God.
 8. He was talking about sanctifying the Lord God in his heart and preparing Him a room in the everyday living of his life.
 9. One aspect of salvation is the preparation of an habitation for the Lord.
- H. Salvation is not the **heavenly maturation** of an **investment** God makes for us here on earth.
1. Salvation is the Person of Christ – the Lord of one’s life – right here and now.
 2. And remember that He is the Captain of our salvation – our military general.
 3. **Ephesians 6:10** – *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

 - a. *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*
 - b. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*
 - c. *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*
 - d. *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*
 - e. *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*
 - f. *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*
 - g. *And take the **helmet of SALVATION**, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”**
 4. The **Christian armor** which is described in **I Thessalonians 5** as well as **Ephesians 6**, is not ceremonial garb to be worn when we eventually stand before our Saviour.
 5. It is practical wear for our every day duties.
 6. And it includes the helmet of salvation.

- I. The words of the Lord Jesus in **John 10** are both wonderful and mysterious.
1. In **verse 7** Christ tells His disciples, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.*
 - a. *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”*
 2. The sheep-fold which lays behind **“Christ the door”** contains all that salvation is.
 - a. It is the **home** of **born again children** – those who have been **adopted** into the family God
 - b. It is there that we are **enfolded** into **Christ’s righteousness**; it is there we are **justified** and **reconciled**.
 - c. It is in that sheep-cote that we pick up the **helmet of salvation** and the rest of the **Christian panoply**.
 3. And then what does the Lord say? *“He shall be saved, and shall go IN and OUT, and find pasture.”*
 4. I am not capable of explaining all that is contained in that business of going in and out.
 5. But it seems to me that it somehow relates to living the Christian life.
- J. Those who have been blessed with salvation are commissioned to go in and out as the sheep of Christ.
1. They aren’t to bed down inside the sheep-fold awaiting death and their departure to heaven.
 2. They are to go out bearing the name of their Shepherd, wearing His glory on their faces.
 3. They are to carry His message; they are to do the sort of things He was doing here on earth.
 4. They are to love others, warn others and help others.
 5. They are the Lord’s envoys.
 6. *“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”*
- K. Paul was one of those sheep. He was one of us.
1. And he carried with him the **TODAY-ASPECT** of salvation.
 2. It is a part of the gospel message – his evangelism.
 3. **I Corinthians 6:2** – *“We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*
 4. *(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, NOW is the day of salvation.)”*
 5. Tomorrow may no longer be the day of your salvation, and very certainly, the day of your death should not be the day of salvation.
 6. *“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”*
- L. And if you **are** a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, then this is a day which has been given to you to be used for the Lord’s glory.
1. In fact, it is the only day you have to use.
 2. Do you possess all those glorious aspects of salvation by grace we’ve been discussing for several weeks?
 3. Assuming you do, then I ask, are you currently living and serving God in the light of that salvation?