

Ev221 Sharing Your Spiritual Journey

Lesson Ev221-7 Salvation as a Spiritual Journey

This lesson is the second of six on “Salvation.” Your last lesson discussed how one’s salvation experience affects the way the person does evangelism. So how do you define salvation? Is it a one-time event that occurs when people pray a ‘sinner’s prayer’? Can it happen when you are alone or can it be a group decision? Is it just one decision or more like a series of decisions or steps on a journey?

You have already learned that accepting Christ happens differently for different people. In this Bible lesson we will look at an Old Testament example of salvation in the story of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. People may pray a prayer, but the expectation of a lifelong relationship of following God often doesn’t happen. This is just one example of how conversion may occur as a process, not necessarily a one-time defining event.

Because of a great famine in the land of Canaan, the family of Jacob went to Egypt at his son Joseph’s invitation. There they prospered and grew into a great multitude. Several generations later, many of the Egyptians began to fear and persecute the Israelites.

They were cruelly oppressed, enslaved to make bricks and to build great structures. The starving Hebrews cried out repeatedly to their God, Yahweh, to deliver them. Finally, their cries were so great that Yahweh sent Moses to deliver them from the hand of Pharaoh. Now Moses was a Hebrew who had been raised in the courts of Pharaoh. He had had to flee to Midian after he had killed an Egyptian for mistreating a Hebrew slave.

After hearing from God through a burning bush, Moses went to Pharaoh. He asked the ruler to release the Israelite slaves, but Pharaoh refused. So God began to inflict great suffering on Egypt—water turned to blood, frogs, boils, and hail. After nine different plagues had been loosed on Egypt, the last one changed the mind of the stiff-necked Pharaoh. After the death of the first-born son in every family and among the livestock, he finally let the Israelites go. Estimates are that their number could have been three million people, including the Egyptians who joined them.

The Hebrews didn’t really believe Moses, but had to step out in faith and follow him through the Red Sea. God miraculously parted the waters so they could pass through on dry ground. The Egyptians decided to pursue them and were swallowed up by the waters in a great act of deliverance by Yahweh. Not long after that, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. After Moses read the Book of the Covenant to them, Israel responded, “We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey” (Ex 24:7).

Despite their vow, they did not obey. They worshipped a golden calf. Even after their deliverance from misery, the Hebrews yearned to go back to Egypt. They disobeyed God when they got to the border of Canaan the first time. Fear gripped their hearts when the ten spies gave a negative report. Joshua and Caleb gave a positive report though. It was a land of milk and honey and much abundance. In faith they said, “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it” (Num 13:30). But the people rebelled and refused to trust God. They wanted to

stone Moses and Aaron. As punishment, they had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. Only then were they able to enter the land God had promised them.

The story of their deliverance is called the Exodus or ‘going out.’ While the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, God led them by a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. These signified his presence. He also provided bread from heaven and quail from the sky to feed them. But still they grumbled and complained. Many of them never entered the Promised Land. All who were 20 years and older at the time of the rebellion, died in the desert.

This story is seen as a ‘type,’ which is defined as a figure or symbol of something else. In this case the Old Testament Exodus account foreshadows salvation in the New Testament. People are in bondage in Egypt—often seen as an image of sin and the world. Moses, the first great prophet, as a type of Christ, was sent by Yahweh to deliver them from their bondage. Here, salvation is depicted as deliverance from sin and the ways of the world. But it’s not just a one-time event. It is an ongoing journey with Yahweh, who makes his presence known through miraculous provision along the way.

The journey with Yahweh is an act of faith and not always easy. God’s miraculous provision became commonplace and taken for granted. Many of the Hebrews grumbled and stumbled along the way with God. They complained, not realizing his full blessing. They repeatedly failed him and broke his laws, and he repeatedly forgave their sin. He restored them to a loving relationship with him, as they came in repentance.

Because they had rebelled and refused to trust God, a whole generation was not allowed to enter Canaan. It was called the land of milk and honey—a ‘type’ of heaven. But their children did inherit the land of promise and found God to be faithful to them. God chose Abraham and his descendants, not because they were perfect people. He knew all their weaknesses and sins, but he was teaching them and making them into what he wanted them to be. In the same way, he chooses us with our weaknesses and sins. As we journey with him, he teaches us and makes us into what he wants us to be.

Ask yourself: *How does understanding salvation as a process—a spiritual journey—affect the way you witness to people and disciple them?*

God’s leading is often viewed as journey. The psalmist uses this image when he writes “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path” (Ps 119:105). By a person’s stepping out in faith, God casts spiritual light ahead just far enough to reveal the next step. So it is a journey of daily seeking and submitting to the will of the Lord. Those you seek to win must understand that accepting Christ is the starting point at which the process of ongoing change is begun.

This story is **important** because the Exodus account shows us some key principles regarding conversion in the Old Testament. God will respond to our calls for deliverance, provide for us miraculously, and bring us to salvation, even though we fail him and need to repent many times.

The **main truth** is that salvation is not always a one-time experience, but can be more of an ongoing process or journey with God. We enjoy his presence and forgiveness along the way to our ultimate destination with him.

Review Questions

1. What is a “type” in Scripture? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said, “A ‘type’ is a symbol, a figure, or story that foreshadows a greater truth or reality for its hearers,” you would be correct.

2. What does the Exodus account tell us about the need to continue to trust God along the journey? [Pause]
 - A. If you said that humans tend to take God’s miraculous provision for granted and grumble because of hardship, but we need to constantly remember God’s provision and deliverance, you are right.

3. What does the Exodus account tell us about the nature of salvation? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “It teaches that salvation is not just about a one-time deliverance from sin, but an ongoing journey with God through the trials of life,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it three times, until you can tell it in your own words. Reflect on the Exodus account of the deliverance of the Hebrews and answer the following questions: In what ways is your own salvation experience of deliverance from sin and the things of the world similar to the deliverance of the Hebrew slaves from the bondage of Egypt? How have you experienced God’s miraculous provision for your spiritual journey as you have walked with him? Tell the story and discuss these questions with a group of friends. Compare your answers.