

Promised Redeemer

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Introduction

Suppose someone had an OT and Jn 3:16 and believed in Immanuel (cf. Is 9:6) as God's Son for eternal life. Is this faith sufficient or insufficient for receiving eternal life? Hodges' statements might be taken to indicate that this faith would be insufficient for salvation: "People are saved by believing in Jesus....Not by believing in an unknown Messiah. Believing in Jesus. Regardless of how people were saved in the OT, this is how they are saved now."¹ In this same article, Hodges indicates that if a person only had Jn 6:47 that would be insufficient because the name *Jesus* (from Jn 6:43) would be missing.² Faith in some Christ is insufficient. Saving faith must embrace *Jesus* as the Christ—at least that is the case now that Christ has come in the flesh in the person of Jesus.

On the other hand, according to Hodges, the name *Jesus* (as such) is not what saves but the person represented by that name. Saving faith is in the historical person of Jesus regardless as to whether those with whom He spoke and saw Him knew His name at the point of coming to saving faith.³ In His encounter with the woman at the well, for example, Jesus receives a response that would be fairly standard for someone in that day and time: "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us" (Jn 4:25). Hodges' point is that she could have been saved even without knowing Jesus' name since she was talking to Jesus the person and could have trusted in Him as the Christ for eternal life even without knowing His name.

Jewish Woman at Well

For sake of a purely hypothetical illustration, suppose that Jesus met another woman at a different well the next week, a Jewish woman, who responded to Jesus by saying, "I believe that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us. I just don't believe that you are Him." After all, conceivably, quite a few people who rejected Jesus would have had an attitude akin to this sentiment. Like the Samaritan woman at the well, they believed that the Messiah was coming; they just did not believe that Jesus was that Messiah.

In all likelihood, a person who rejected Jesus as the Christ was not a believer in the OT sense of the word since exegetical indicators would

¹ Zane Hodges, "The Spirit of Antichrist: Decoupling Jesus from the Christ," *JOTGES* 20:39 (Autumn 2007), 42.

² *Ibid.*, 41.

³ *Ibid.*, 43.

lead us to suspect that any OT believer who encountered a call to faith in Jesus as the Christ during Jesus' earthly ministry infallibly responded positively. Thus, those Messianic expecters of Christ who were rejecters of Jesus probably had a defective view of MR in the GMR (*Grounds, Means, Result*) model.⁴ Consequently, as a result of rejecting Jesus as the Christ, they subsequently had a defective view of G as well. This article will explore why this is necessarily the case.

To proceed with the illustration of the Jewish woman at the well, suppose that she believed that her offering OT sacrifices were a means of her receiving soteric pardon as a linear result. In such case, her faith in the Promised Redeemer was defective because she was trusting in her performance for probation rather than in her punctiliar appropriation for salvation.⁵ This Jewish woman is not a believer because she is trusting in her sacrifices for entrance into the Messianic kingdom. Suppose that Jesus clarifies that sacrifices cannot soteriologically atone and shows her from the OT that the Messiah would have to die an atoning death and that the proper soteric response is simple faith. Further assume that she comes to believe that Jesus is correct in His interpretation of OT concerning M and R, but she does not believe that Jesus is the Messiah. Perhaps she just believes Him to be a prophet. Would she be saved? No.

Now that she has met Jesus and has rejected Him as the Christ, her resultant defective view of G would disqualify her from receiving eternal life. She is not trusting in Jesus for eternal life. Had someone other than Jesus presented that clarification of MR and had she accepted this clarification from this other person without having heard about Jesus, she could have been saved with an Immanuel (OT level) understanding of the Messiah. But once she heard the clarifier that Immanuel had come, she would have to believe in the historical person Jesus.

⁴ They had to believe that the Promised Redeemer would take care of their sin problem simply on the condition of their faith in that redeemer. In terms of GMR, their faith had to be *grounded* in that redeemer, they had to understand that they were saved by *means* of their punctiliar faith in the redeemer, and they had to understand that the *result* of their faith in this promised redeemer was unconditional security.

⁵ OT believers may have not have realized that their sacrifices were typologically pointing forward to the Messiah offering Himself as their sacrifice. These OT believers simply may have viewed their sacrifices as an expression of faith in the Messiah who would somehow take away their sins. What was necessary for their faith to be imputed as soteric righteousness was that they not trust in their sacrifices as a means to secure soteric pardon. The expressions or manifestations of their faith were not imputed to them as righteous, nor were they the means of that imputation. Their sacrifices were not imputed to them as righteousness nor were their sacrifices the means of their being granted that righteousness. Rather, their faith in the Promised Redeemer resulted in the righteousness of the Promised Redeemer being imputed to their account.

Suppose this Jewish woman came to this persuasion that Jesus was the Messiah twenty years later, after she initially met Jesus at the well, and then at this later point in time she finally believed that He was the Christ. Further, suppose that she believed that He died an atoning death but (under Gnostic influence) thought that whether He rose from the dead was immaterial. In her opinion, even if He was just raised from the dead spiritually, she was still trusting in Him alone for eternal life. Then her GMR is savingly sufficient. She would be saved even though she had a defective view of the resurrection.⁶ In such a case, her defective perspective would not prevent her from believing in the correct person. Her faith would be grounded in Jesus as the historical Christ for eternal life, although she wrongly discredits some historical information about Jesus as the Christ.

Technical Abbreviations

To express these options with greater technical precision, she could be saved by trusting in HPI (*historical person Immanuel*) until she was exposed to the HPJ (*historical person Jesus*). Then she would have to believe in HPJ. Before that time, her belief in HPI was pointing her unknowingly to HPJ. However, after being exposed to HPJ, if she rejected HPJ, then her belief in HPI was pointing her unknowingly away from HPJ and to HP2. In other words, once she heard of HPJ, she no longer could believe savingly in HPI without believing in HPJ. Otherwise, she would believe that $HPI \neq HPJ$ (which is non-saving G). In such a case, she would believe in HP2 (which is non-saving faith).⁷

Saving G (any one of the following three):

1. HPI (=HPJ)

OT believers who had not been exposed to HPJ but who believed in Immanuel (or equivalent) as the Promised Redeemer experienced saving faith. Even though they were not aware of it, by trusting in HPI, they were implicitly and unknowingly trusting in HPJ.

⁶ Her defective view of Jesus' resurrection correspondingly would involve an erroneous view of the *means* by which Jesus accomplished her redemption. But this defective view of Jesus' role would not nullify M because she would still have a proper view of her role as simple faith. She still would qualify for a soterically correct M.

⁷ Saving faith must have correct GMR, non-saving faith has an incorrect GMR. All three components must be sufficiently accurate for saving faith to occur. For the purpose of the present inquiry, however, G is the focus of attention.

2. HPI = HPJ

OT-NT believers who have been exposed to HPJ and explicitly believe Jesus to be HPI have experienced saving faith.

3. HPJ

NT believers who have been exposed only to HPJ and believe in Jesus for eternal life have experienced saving faith.

Non-saving G (any one of the following three):

1. HPI ≠ HPJ

People who heard the OT and NT message and rejected Jesus have not experienced saving faith. They reject HPJ before coming to saving faith in HPI. After rejecting HPJ, it is too late to be saved by HPI since they explicitly would be rejecting HPJ and implicitly believing in HP2. After rejecting HPJ, their faith in HPI would no longer be pointing them to HPJ.

2. HP2

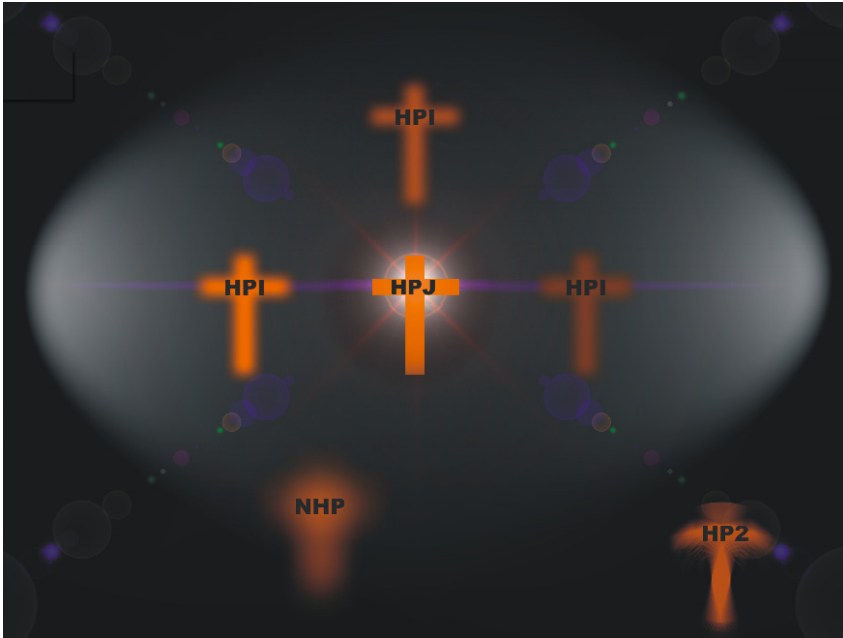
People who hear the OT message but who do not hear the NT message and believe in a historical person other than Jesus as Messiah have not experienced saving faith. This is a corollary of the above statement since $HP2 \neq HPJ$.

3. NHP

People who believe in some non-historical impersonal entity have not experienced saving faith. The premise that G would have to be belief in a historical person is based in part upon the Promised Redeemer motif that was introduced cryptically from the beginning in Gen 3:15. Belief in some non-personal (or non-physical) entity such as Logos, Sophia, or Light would not qualify for saving faith. The world through its wisdom may project Logos, Sophia or Light theories, but these theories do not suffice as a sufficient grounds for coming to saving faith in God (1Cor 1:21). Faith comes from hearing the word of God about Christ (Rom 10:17). To trust in a Promised Redeemer who did not come in the flesh is to trust in Antichrist rather than Christ (1Jn 4:2-3). Faith in Antichrist does not result in eternal life. This is also

corollary of the initial statement regarding non-saving faith since NHP ≠ HPJ.

Promised Redeemer in Focus



Digressive HPI

In terms of this pictorial illustration, the OT light on the left points forward to the Promised Redeemer who was to come. The light on the right points backward to the Promised Redeemer who came. In the OT era, people were saved by trusting in this coming Promised Redeemer. With progressive clarity, more and more details were revealed about this Promised Redeemer to bring Him more clearly into focus, even His name as Immanuel was eventually given and His role as an atoning sacrifice was indicated. When Jesus came, He was revealed as this HPI with crystal clear focus and with an explosion of light. Therefore, in the illustration, moving directly from left to right, blurry HPI becomes a clear HPJ when one reaches the center where Jesus clearly is revealed to be the Christ in an explosion of light via His resurrection.

Inversely, while Jesus was on earth, the possibility of believing in HPI without believing in HPJ grew fainter as more and more people heard about Jesus. Thus, the blurry HPI placed vertically above HPJ in the diagram (to signify as occurring in the same time period as HPI) has grown fainter than the HPI located to the left before HPJ. In the years following

Jesus' ministry, the possibility of believing in HPI without believing in HPJ faded away to all but a theoretical possibility. It became increasing impossible to believe in the person of the Promised Redeemer without believing in the name of Jesus. So the blurry HPI to the right of HPJ has faded even more. This migration and fading of HPI denotes the inverse impact of progressive revelation on HPI. As revelation progresses to and beyond HPJ, the possibility of being saved by HPI diminishes.

Non-focused NHP

While there might have been some personifications of Sophia and other mediums as useful means of pointing to the Christ, these non-personal representations were focused insufficiently on the person of the historical Jesus to suffice as an object for saving faith. These non-personal representations of Christ are represented on in the illustration as NHP (non-historical person). NHP is even more blurry than HPI and too out of focus to provide a saving picture of Christ. Nevertheless, NHP at least partially falls within the spectrum of light. While there might be some NHP that was subsequent to HPJ and pointed back to HPJ (such as Gnostic NHP), NHP is placed to the left of HPJ to denote the fact that the introduction of many of these mediums historically preceded HPJ and pointed forward to HPJ.

Non-lit HP2

Antichrists arose denying the personal manifestation of Christ in the flesh, and antichrist will arise conversely claiming to be Christ in the flesh. These antichrists, whether they are NHP or HP2 respectively, fail as objects of saving faith. They fall in the darkness completely outside of the OT and NT sphere of light. They are blurred in the illustration since we do not know in advance who they are. Still, they are definitely distinguishable as historical people. They are placed on the right of HPJ to show that HP2 is predominately in the future.

Name = Person

Progressive revelation clarified the target, but it did not change the target. The object of saving faith always has been the historical *person* known as the Promised Redeemer. "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His *name* everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43)." Did they know Him by *name*—*Jesus*? No. But they believed in Him whom we now know by this name today. They believed in the same *historical Person* that we do today. Faith in this Person is the proper grounds for saving faith, whether that Person was known by the name *Jesus* or not.

Hypothetical Situations

To consider the plausibility of these findings, let us consider some hypothetical scenarios. What about someone who lived one hundred miles away while Jesus was ministering on earth and who had only heard and believed the OT message about HPI but died before hearing the NT message about HPJ? Were they lost as a result failing to believe in the name of Jesus? At what point in time, assuming one exists, did that OT message cease to be saving? Did saving faith make a progression from (1) *having to believe that the Messiah would come* to (2) *having to believe that He was there* to (3) *having to believe that He had come during that point in history even if one had not heard that Messiah had come*? Each question must be answered negatively.

Jesus did not cease to be the same historical person as time passed by. It is not the name but the person represented by name that must be the object of faith. For those who had not heard that name, hypothetically speaking, they could still be saved by trusting in the person of the Promised Messiah via the OT prophesies.⁸ When an OT believer heard the message that Jesus had come, exegetical evidence suggests that they promptly believed in Jesus. But suppose in some cases it took them a couple of days before they came to believe that Jesus was the OT Messiah in whom they had believed all this previous time. Was their salvation lost or suspended during this interim period? No. For the sake of theological speculation, suppose one of these HPI believers died the first day of hearing the news of HPJ without coming to believe that Jesus was the Promised Messiah in whom they already had savingly believed? Would they lose their salvation? No. They already had been granted eternal life via a properly grounded faith before their exposure to the name Jesus.

Yet suppose others who had heard of HPI, like our hypothetical Jewish woman at the well, and during the course of Jesus' ministry, they eventually came to believe that eternal life was to be had as a result of simply believing in the Promised Messiah. Yet they still were not persuaded that Jesus was the Promised Messiah. Maybe they just regarded Jesus as a prophet who correctly clarified that eternal life was to be had by trusting in the Promised Messiah. Could such people be saved? No. They no longer could savingly trust in a coming Messiah without believing that Jesus was that coming Messiah since the proclamation of Jesus required that they trust in Him for eternal life. As a result of having heard this proclamation and having met this Person, they were required to trust in this Person for eternal life. To reject this Person as the object of their faith would be to reject the Promised Messiah. They could not savingly believe in the OT Promised Redeemer and yet disbelieve in Jesus. The progressive

⁸ As noted in the vertical HPI.

revelation as to who Jesus' identity required that they believe the clear revelation to the extent of placing their faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah. They could not believe in the OT revelation about the Messiah without believing that Jesus was that Messiah once they heard the clearer revelation. Therefore, Jews today who have heard of Jesus cannot be saved by the OT message without believing in Jesus because their having heard the clearer revelation that Jesus is that Messiah makes it necessary for Jews today who have heard about Jesus to believe that Jesus is that Messiah.⁹

Real Life Situations

This position will bring up an interesting dilemma. Suppose a liberal today believes that Jesus is the Messiah but does not believe in Jesus' literal resurrection. Does this lack of belief nullify the liberal's faith so that it cannot be saving faith? Evidently not. The same person is being believed in, the historical Jesus, although some historical fact about that Person is not being believed. For this reason, the proper deduction appears to be that gnostic Christians and liberal Christians can be saved if they believe in the historical Jesus for eternal life. Jews today who have heard of Jesus cannot be saved simply via the OT message since they have heard the NT message, but liberals (even Gnostic ones) can be saved despite the progressive revelation that shows that this historical Person literally rose from the dead if these liberals believe in this historical Person for eternal life.

Conclusion

Believing any one historical fact about Jesus so as to uniquely identify Jesus as the historical person being believed in for eternal life apparently would be sufficient grounds for salvation as long as competing historical data did not lead one to believe in someone or something else other than Jesus as the historical Person being believed in for eternal life. The fundamental theorem herein is that saving faith must be in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life. If a person believes in Jesus as the Christ and simultaneously believes in someone or something else in addition to Jesus as the Christ for eternal life, then such faith would fail to meet the fundamental criteria. For this reason, saving faith must be limited to HPJ or to an HPI that is implicitly or explicitly equivalent to HPJ. Faith in an alternate HPI or in an additional HP2 or in a NHP would disqualify one for saving faith. This observation explains why HPI ceases to be sufficient for salvation after one has been exposed to the message which identifies Jesus as the name of the Messiah and why salvation cannot be found in any

⁹ HPI pointed to HPJ up until the point of time that one encountered HPJ. After such an encounter, a person who believed that HPI pointed to someone other than HPJ would mistakenly transfer their faith in HPI to HP2. But faith in HP2 cannot save.

other name once a person has been exposed to the Messiah named Jesus. Up until the point that the hearers of the OT message hear that Jesus is the Messiah, the unified message they are contemplating would be regarding an HPI that implicitly points them savingly to Jesus. However, after encountering the historical Jesus, if they still seek salvation in a HPI other than Jesus, then they are seeking salvation in someone other than Jesus—a HP2 rather than the true HPI.

This discussion simply has sought to explore the logical possibilities. But supernatural limitations may yet need to be considered. A person cannot come to saving faith in the Promised Redeemer apart from the drawing of the Holy Spirit. Logic does not prevent one from speculating that even today a person who has never heard the name Jesus could still be presented with the OT message and Jn 3:16 and be led to saving faith in Christ without knowing that His name is Jesus. HPI is a valid theoretical possibility even today. But would the Holy Spirit honor such an evangelistic message today that bypasses the name of Jesus? The role of the Spirit is to draw people to Jesus as the Christ and glorify Jesus as the Christ. Would the Spirit bypass the name of Jesus in drawing people today to Christ?

This proposal certainly seems counterintuitive. Surely no Christian evangelist today would try such a twisted experiment so as to avoid the name of Jesus in leading a person to Jesus. Theoretically, doing so might be logically possible, but pragmatically it would be morally reprehensible. Similarly, while logically it is not necessary to believe in the resurrection in order to believe in Jesus as the Christ, it would be thoroughly unacceptable evangelistically not to use the resurrection (the greatest display of light) in bringing a person to Jesus as the Light. What might be possible logically is not necessarily permissible morally. Evangelists are under moral obligation to present the message of Jesus as clearly and effectively as possible. Doing so necessarily means that they must present Jesus as the resurrected Christ.¹⁰

¹⁰ A related point might be made regarding the Deity of Christ.