

SOTERIOLOGY (162)

True salvation will eventually be evidenced in the life by its fruit. Children of God and children of the devil manifest themselves over a period of time by their habitual pattern of life.

Those who attempt to “rightly divide” the context must clearly recognize the central point of the context. There were those in John’s day, as there is in our day, who were really not right with God, but were professing to be right with God (I John 2:19). John is giving guidelines for spotting fruit that proves one is truly right with God.

5) Hebrews 6:4-6 - Here is the passage this teacher has personally seen used the most in an attempt to defend the thesis that one may lose his salvation. This clearly becomes a matter of context. This particular passage has been viewed in at least four ways:

1. It refers to professing Jewish believers who are not saved.
2. It refers to a hypothetical impossibility to fall away or to crucify Christ a second time.
3. It refers to any believer who might lose his salvation.
4. It refers to a true believer who may lose his ability to grow.

It may be observed from the context with relative certainty that the text is dealing with a true believer:

- 1) He is exhorted to approach God’s throne with confidence (4:16).
- 2) He is supposed to be a teacher, mature in the things of God (5:12).
- 3) He is one who has been enlightened (6:4a).
- 4) He is one who has received the Holy Spirit (6:4b).
- 5) He is identified as being “beloved” (6:9).
- 6) He has accomplished things for the name of God (6:10).

From these contextual observations, we may safely and accurately conclude that this passage is talking about a true believer and that is one who has truly come to faith in Jesus Christ.

It may also be observed from the context with certainty that the subject at stake is one of a lack of growth, not a loss of salvation (5:12-14). The writer of Hebrews is rebuking the Jewish believers for their lack of maturity (5:12-14), and challenging them to get on with their growth (6:1-2).

Several key points follow this basic rebuke:

- 1) Growth can only occur by divine permission. 6:3
- 2) God may not permit growth to a believer who is continually struggling over the same basic elements of salvation. 6:4-6

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Truth is God has given His Word so we might “know” we are saved (I John 5:13).

3) God will not permit growth to a believer who does not take in the Word of God and bear fruit. 6:7-8

Certain key points may be observed here concerning the criteria God used for determining who will be permitted to grow and who won't:

- 1) A person who won't be permitted to grow is hung up on elementary teaching. 6:1
- 2) A person who won't be permitted to grow has been exposed to God's wealth and Word. 6:4-5
- 3) A person who won't be permitted to grow takes in God's Word but does not bear fruit. 6:7-8

Such a person cannot ever be cursed by God, but such a one comes as close as he can to being cursed because all of his works will be burned and he will eventually lose all of his rewards (6:8). He will be saved, but so as by fire (I Cor. 3:15).

It is clear from this context that the writer of Hebrews wanted every believer to have the “full assurance” of salvation until the end (Heb. 6:11). The writer wanted “better things” of the believers in the aftermath of their salvation (6:9). He wanted believers who would grow deep in their knowledge and who would produce fruit in their lives.

The writer knew that God might not permit growth, so he warned these believers to start learning and maturing and applying God's Word to their lives.

This passage has nothing to do with one losing his salvation. It has to do with losing one's ability to grow and mature and losing one's rewards.

(Sub-heading #4) - Passages that contextually refer to a warning aimed at Israel.

This particular group of Scriptures is misunderstood in its context and in its theology and in its application. Although there is a practical application that can be made from “all” Scripture (II Tim. 3:16), a proper practical application may only be made when there has been a proper interpretation. In this section, contexts are again overlooked and passages that are primarily aimed at Israel are misinterpreted to be passages aimed at N.T. Christians concerning the subject of losing salvation.

1) Matthew 25:1-13 - This parable of the ten virgins is often used as a proof text for claiming one may lose his salvation. However, upon careful examination of the context we may discover that is not the intent of the passage.

This particular parable sits in the context of the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:1-3) and is clearly designed to inform the Jewish disciples as to what things will be like just before Christ comes at the end of the age to establish His kingdom (Matt. 24:3).

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The particular interest of these Jewish disciples and of all Jews today is the interest of their kingdom (Matt. 24:14; 25:1). The Jews were and still are very much interested in the signs that will end an age of Jewish oppression and begin the Kingdom Age of Jewish blessing.

In this context, Christ gives a series of signs that will precede His coming to establish the kingdom for Israel (Matt. 24:1-28). He also carefully describes when His second coming will take place and what it will be like (Matt. 24:29-31). After describing the signs, the Tribulation and His second coming, He warns Israel to get herself ready for His return. This particular warning is designed to keep Israel from the same type of proud, over-confident attitude that originally caused her to miss her kingdom the first time Christ came (Matt. 23:37-39).

Matthew 25 is a kingdom judgment chapter. When Christ returns to earth a second time, just before He establishes His earthly kingdom for Israel, He will conduct a series of judgments to determine who will be allowed into this kingdom and who won't (i.e. Judgment of Nations in which the treatment of Israel during the Great Tribulation becomes the basis for judgment) (Matt. 25:32).

In the parable of the ten virgins, Christ is driving home the point that just because a person is Jewish does not automatically mean that person will enter the kingdom. The percentage given in this parable is that 50% of the Jews will enter and 50% of the Jews won't enter (Matt. 25:2). Once we understand this context, it is not too difficult to give a proper interpretation of this parable.

When Jesus Christ returns to establish His earthly kingdom for Israel, things will begin with a judgment. At this time, Israel will have just come through the Tribulation (Matt. 24:29). During the Tribulation, some of the Jews will have responded to the evangelistic message of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Rev. 7:4-8), plus other non-Jews will also have prepared themselves for the coming of Jesus Christ. These Jewish believers will not take the "mark of the beast," nor will they worship the beast (Rev. 13:14-17; 14:9-10). These Jews will believe that Christ will soon return just as the 144,000 have said, and they will not succumb to satanic pressure. We must remember that during the Tribulation, God will specifically be doing dramatic things in and for Israel. Miraculous kinds of things will once again be evidenced.

There will, however, be Jewish people who will assume that they will automatically inherit the Jewish kingdom simply because they are Jewish. There will be Jews who will take the mark of the Beast and will bow down and worship him who will still expect to enter the kingdom. In this parable, Christ will make it very clear that such will not be the case. There will be many Jews who will not be admitted into the kingdom and the doors of entrance will not be open for them (Matt. 25:11-12). Christ closes the parable by warning Israel to be on the alert for His coming at all times (Matt. 25:13). Even though they have specific signs to look for that will precede His coming, they still do not know the precise moment Christ will return and they need to not buckle to the satanic pressure.

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In the following parable, “The Parable of the Talents” (25:14-30), the same thought is communicated. The kingdom program for Israel is like a man who leaves His own country for a time and entrusts His work to His servants.

When He returns to pick up His program with Israel, He discovers that some of the Jews were faithful and some weren't. Those who weren't faithful during the Tribulation are damned forever (25:30).

These parables are kingdom parables pertaining to Israel. Jesus Christ has temporarily changed His program and focus from His kingdom program with Israel to His Gentile program with all nationalities of people. Time and time again, the Bible makes it clear that eventually this Gentile Age will end and the kingdom program will once again be operative (i.e. Rom. 11:25-27).

For nearly 2,000 years now, Christ has primarily been working out His program with Gentiles all over the world. But the thing that will signal the end of the Gentile Age will be the Rapture of the Church. The Rapture will end the Church Age and will signal that God is once again taking up His program with Israel.

God will use the Tribulation as a means to regather Israel. During the Tribulation, God will give various special gifts, abilities and talents to many Jews. When He finally returns at the end of the Tribulation, there will be an accountability given by each Jew as to what they did with what they had in view of Christ's return.

The purpose of these two parables is to warn the nation Israel that just because a person is Jewish does not automatically mean he will enter the kingdom. Just as in this age one must be right with God by faith in Jesus Christ to enter heaven, in the next age the Jew must be right with God by believing in the future return of Christ and by not submitting to satanic Tribulation lures.

Those who are right with God during the Tribulation will clearly demonstrate that fact by their active work and faithful service. They will have gone through the Tribulation and not followed the Antichrist.

These parables have nothing to do with a New Testament Grace Age believer losing his N.T. salvation. This text is an appeal to Israel to not make the same mistake the next time Christ returns as Israel did the first time He came. Israel refused to humble herself to God's truth the first time and Christ realized 50% would the next time.

2) Hebrews 10:26-29 - This text, for obvious reasons, is a favorite one for the Arminian who claims you can lose your salvation. However, upon close examination of the context, this view can be proved false.

Some commentators, who hold strongly to the position that you cannot lose your salvation, suggest that this text is not referring to the true possessors of eternal life, but Jewish professors of eternal life.