

The Revolution of the Cross

Foundations - Unit 319



Week 6 – Our Response – “Salvation by Allegiance Alone”

Matthew W. Bates, "Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King" (Grand Rapids, Baker Publishing Group: 2017)

What did Jesus say about "salvation"?

- Matt 19:16-22
- Mark 10:17-22
- Luke 18:18-22
- Matt 22:34-40
- John 14:15, 21
- John 15:10, 12

What did Jesus preach?

These are all the places where good news or gospel is mentioned in the Gospels:

gospel

- ESV**
- [Mt 4:23](#) **X** And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the [gospel](#) of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.
- [Mt 9:35](#) **X** And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the [gospel](#) of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.
- [Mt 24:14](#) **X** And this [gospel](#) of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
- [Mt 26:13](#) **X** Truly, I say to you, wherever this [gospel](#) is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her."
- [Mk 1:1](#) **X** The beginning of the [gospel](#) of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- [Mk 1:14](#) **X** Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the [gospel](#) of God,
- [Mk 1:15](#) **X** and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the [gospel](#)."
- [Mk 10:29](#) **X** Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the [gospel](#),
- [Mk 13:10](#) **X** And the [gospel](#) must first be proclaimed to all nations.
- [Mk 14:9](#) **X** And truly, I say to you, wherever the [gospel](#) is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."
- [Mk 16:15](#) **X** And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the [gospel](#) to the whole creation.
- [Lk 9:6](#) **X** And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the [gospel](#) and healing everywhere.

[Lk 20:1](#) **X** One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the [gospel](#), the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up

good NEAR news

[Mt 11:5](#) **X**^{ESV} the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have [good news](#) preached to them.

[Lk 1:19](#) **X** And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this [good news](#).”

[Lk 2:10](#) **X** And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you [good news](#) of great joy that will be for all the people.

[Lk 3:18](#) **X** So with many other exhortations he preached [good news](#) to the people.

[Lk 4:18](#) **X** “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim [good news](#) to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

[Lk 4:43](#) **X** but he said to them, “I must preach the [good news](#) of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.”

[Lk 7:22](#) **X** And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have [good news](#) preached to them.

[Lk 8:1](#) **X** Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the [good news](#) of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him,

[Lk 16:16](#) **X** “The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the [good news](#) of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it.

What was the gospel that Paul preached?

- Acts 16:10
- Romans 1:1-5
 - The gospel was a promise not just a prediction
 - It was promised through the OT
 - It was a promise about Jesus the son of David
 - A promise means God chose to make himself beholden to his human creatures
 - This promise was made true with the incarnation – God with us
 - Jesus was also a human being but a human who within the line of David would achieve kingship
 - Who “was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead”
 - Jesus the incarnated God died
 - He was resurrected

- The resurrection declared Jesus to be the “Son of God in Power”. This title is one of sovereign reigning and authority. (Matt 28)
- Jesus is both the Messiah, the anointed one, the one who fulfilled the promises, and he is also Lord, i.e. king, emperor, ruler
- The declaration of Jesus as Son-of-God-in-Power is to bring about the “*obedience of faith*”.
- So Jesus moved from pre-existent with God to human to dead human to resurrected human to Son-of-God-in-Power (Philippians 2: 6– 11 a kingly position)

In both Romans and Philippians, Jesus is granted a heavenly office and he is explicitly called Lord— even if that lordship is further described somewhat differently in Romans and Philippians. In Romans it is described with the informal title “Son-of-God-in-Power” and in Philippians as entailing the receipt of a name and of homage that is otherwise appropriate to Yahweh alone.¹

Romans 1: 16–17.

So the cross achieved some objective things. The world is different because of the cross event and the resurrection;

So the main idea in Romans 1: 16–17 is that the gospel is a transformative story because it reveals “the righteousness of God”— that is, the resurrection-effecting verdict that God rendered over Jesus the king and that resulted in our ability to share his resurrection life as a gift from God.²

If the ‘righteousness of God’ is God’s covenant faithfulness, that is his faithfulness to fulfill his covenant promises regardless of what Israel did, then Jesus is raised from the dead because God will always be true to his covenant.

In Habakkuk the ‘righteous’ is singular and is referring to a single person, ‘the righteous one’ rather than a group of people. **Isa 53:11** clearly points out who this is, the Servant of God, the Messiah.

So Paul is saying, “In the gospel the covenant faithfulness of God is revealed *by faith for faith*, as it is written “The righteous one, Yahweh’s servant, the Messiah, Jesus, will live by faithfulness; i.e. *by his faithful loyalty to God.*”

Thus the whole passage can be read:

¹ Bates, Matthew W. *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (p. 36).

² Bates, Matthew W. *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (p. 42). Baker Publishing Group.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who gives allegiance to Jesus as the Christ, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in the gospel the righteousness (*the covenant faithfulness*) of God is revealed by means of Jesus' allegiance to God; this righteousness becomes ours through our allegiance to Jesus the king. For both Jesus and us, all of this accords with the prophetic word, "But the righteous one shall live by allegiance." (Rom. 1: 16–17)³

The gospel reaches its zenith with Jesus's installation and sovereign rule as the Christ, the king. As such, faith in Jesus is best described as allegiance to him as king.⁴

Arguments in favour of Allegiance

The following are a brief outline of evidence that points to the translation of *pistis* as allegiance rather than faith in specific verses. Remember that Scripture is *written for us not to us*, so it is important to ask how words were being used at the time of the NT writing.

In the New Testament Era but non-biblical

The Jews, however, continued to maintain goodwill and unswerving loyalty [*pistis*] toward the dynasty; (3 Macc. 3: 2–4 NRSV)⁵

This is a description of the Jews relationship with the then ruler, King Ptolemy, and was written around the same time as the NT. What is stressed here is the faithful behavior towards the king by the Jews, which is their loyalty or their allegiance.

In Paul's Writings

Romans 3:3

But they had failed. They had kept the message all to themselves, imagining that it was simply a charter of privilege for them as a nation—as though a postman were to regard his bag of mail as a sign of what an important person he was, and therefore to refuse to deliver it⁶

³ Bates, Matthew W. *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (p. 44).

⁴ Bates, Matthew W. *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (pp. 77-78).

⁵ Bates, Matthew W. *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (p. 79).

⁶ Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans Part 1: Chapters 1-8* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 44.

The final use of *pistis*, ‘faithfulness of God’ cannot refer to God’s belief in himself, but rather to God’s faithfulness to do what he as the king promised to do, that is, his fidelity or allegiance to his own character.

This then shows that *pistis* and its word group can carry the idea of allegiance. Paul’s further use of the word in Romans can read like this;

But now the righteousness of God (*God’s faithfulness to his covenant promises*) has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through the **allegiance** of Jesus the Christ for all who give **allegiance**. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in the Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, through his allegiance. (Rom. 3: 21– 25)

Therefore, since we have been justified by **allegiance** (*that is the allegiance of Jesus, from 3:21*), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus the Christ. (Rom. 5: 1)

N. T. Wright declares,

For Paul, *pistis* is the personal allegiance to the God who was now to be known as ‘the God who raised Jesus from the dead’; personal confession that ‘Jesus is Lord.’⁷

If we consider *pistis* to mean allegiance, then these passages take on a much stronger sense of having to do something for the King.

Pistis, then is a much wider term than just faith or belief. While this is still true, its meaning must also incorporate the idea of allegiance.

13/ Bring All the Pieces Together

If we go back to where we began, we looked at the use of the word ‘cross’ in NT scripture and noticed that Jesus required that people ‘take up their cross and follow him’ (Matt 10:38, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23)

⁷ N. T. Wright, *The Paul Debate – Critical Questions for Understanding the Apostle* (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2015), 14.

In conversations about ‘salvation’ Jesus was very clear that doing something was required to be involved in salvation; Matt 19:17, Mark 10:19, Luke 18:20, John 14:15, 21 and John 15:10.

The cross event, both Jesus death and resurrection, brought reconciliation between God and Humanity: that is, the restoration of the original relationship, humanity living under the sovereignty of God.

In the cross event Jesus was victorious over the powers of sin and death and in achieving this victory became the “Son of God in Power”, who is the ruler of the cosmos, Jesus the Lord.

In order for any human to re-enter this restored relationship they are required to give allegiance to the King, Jesus.

Jesus and his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension is the climax of the gospel. The full gospel as established in the NT, is the story of King Jesus;

King Jesus.....

1. preexisted with the Father,
2. took on human flesh, fulfilling God’s promises to David,
3. died for sins in accordance with the Scriptures,
4. was buried,
5. was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,
6. appeared to many,
7. is seated at the right hand of God as Lord, and
8. will come again as judge.⁸

Salvation then can be summarized in these verses;

John 3:16

Romans 10:9-10

John 14:15, 21

So, in the final analysis, salvation is by allegiance alone. That is, God requires nothing more or nothing less than allegiance to Jesus as king for initial, current, and final salvation. As such, while continuing to affirm the absolute centrality of the cross, the atonement, and the resurrection, the church must move away from a salvation culture that spins around the axis of “faith alone” in the sufficiency of Jesus’s sacrifice. It must move toward a gospel culture that centers upon “allegiance alone” to Jesus the enthroned king. With the Apostles’ Creed as a pledge of allegiance,

⁸ Bates, Matthew W. Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King (p. 52).

the rallying cry of the victorious church can become “We give allegiance to Jesus the king.” For as the creed reminds us, Jesus the Christ is “our Lord” and he “is seated at the right hand of God,” and as such he both merits and demands our unreserved loyalty.⁹

⁹ Bates, Matthew W. *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (p. 213).