

Symbols of Salvation in the Old Testament

Objectives

To understand the symbols of Our Lord's salvation in the Old Testament and to see how God's love transcends all time in that He had our salvation in mind from the beginning

References

- ❖ "Salvation in the Orthodox Understanding" by HH Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ "How had people been saved?" by HH Pope Shenouda III
- ❖ "Commentaries in the Book of Genesis" by Father Tadros Malaty

Scriptural Verse

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2: 8- 9)

Lesson Outlines

The Salvation was done by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23) and was revealed to us through the many symbols and prophecies through the Old Testament. The prophecies were direct explanation like Psalm 22; and the symbols were performed either in people, things or events as follows.

1- The Leather Garments (Genesis 3: 21)

When Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness, they covered their bodies with fig leaves. God made tunics of skin (by killing an innocent animal) to clothe them and this act symbolized the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ being shed to cover our nakedness (Revelation 3: 18).

2- The Sacrifice of Abel (Genesis 4: 3-5)

Cain's sacrifice was not accepted because it was from the fruit of the cursed earth but Abel's offer was accepted because it was an acknowledgement of the fact (known from his father through tradition) that there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood which symbolizes the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ shed on the cross (Hebrews 11:4).

3- Noah's Ark (Genesis 6: 13-14)

God told Noah to build an ark of wood so that he and his family would escape the oncoming flood. The ark serves as a clear symbol of the wooden cross of the Lord Jesus Christ which carried the wrath of God away from humanity.

4- Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22)

This great Bible story reveals many symbols:

- ❖ As the obedient father Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac on the altar, God willingly offered His only son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice on the cross to save the entire world. He did not spare Him as He spared Isaac (Romans 8:32).
- ❖ As Isaac obeyed his father and went with him up the mountain, the Lord Jesus obeyed His Father up to His death.
- ❖ As Isaac was made to carry on his shoulder the wood for the offering up the mountain, so the Lord Jesus carried His cross to the place of His own crucifixion.
- ❖ As Isaac came down from the mountain alive, So the Lord Jesus resurrected from death and abolished death by His death.

5- Jacob's Ladder (Genesis 28: 10-13)

On his way to his uncle Laban, Jacob dreamed he saw a ladder rising from the earth and going up to heaven with angels ascending and descending upon it. The ladder is a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ Who said: "you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (John 1:51).

As the ladder connected heaven and earth, we can see the Lord on the cross who came to reconcile God with humanity (1 Timothy 2: 5-6).

6- The Lamb of Passover (Exodus 12: 1-13)

As the blood of the unblemished lamb was the way of salvation from death, also the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, having no sin, shed on the cross, is the only path to salvation from eternal death (1 Corinthians 5:7).

7- The Tree which was thrown into the bitter water (Exodus 15: 25)

During their path in the wilderness, the Israelites passed by a place called Marah and could not drink because the water was bitter. The Lord showed Moses a tree to be cast in the waters and the waters were made sweet. The tree symbolized the cross through which death and the bitterness of sin was transformed to life; and darkness to light.

8- Water came out of the Rock (Exodus 17: 5-6)

Also during their path, the Israelites had no water to drink. Moses had to strike the rock, and water came out of it. This rock symbolized the Lord Jesus Christ who was struck upon the cross for our sake (1 Corinthians 10: 1-4). As the rock, the Lord Jesus was pierced with the spear in His side to bring forth water and blood that are the source of our spiritual life (Isaiah 53: 4-5).

9- The Uplifted Hands of Moses (Exodus 17: 12-13)

The Israelites were attacked by the Amalek during their path in the wilderness. Joshua took men to fight and Moses rose up his hands with the rod of God. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let it down, Amalek prevailed. His hands became very heavy, so he sat on a stone and Aaron and Hur supported his hands till sunset and Joshua defeated Amalek. Moses' uplifted hands was a clear symbol of the Lord Jesus on the cross and

the defeat of Satan. Moses and Joshua together symbolized the battle between the Lord and Satan on our behalf till now and the eternal defeat through the cross (Exodus 17:16).

10- The Bronze Serpent (Numbers 6-9)

The Lord sent fiery serpents among His people to bite and kill them due to their continuous rebel. After their repentance, Moses had to rise up a bronze serpent on a pole so that everyone bitten by the serpent, when he looks at it, shall live. As the bronze serpent with no poison is lifted up to heal the rebels who look up to it; also our Savior without sin is lifted up to heal the sinner who looks up to Him (Isaiah 45:22) as the right thief who was the 1st one to look to the Lord asking for healing and got it (Luke 23: 42-43).

11- The Old Testament Sacrifices (Book of Leviticus)

God said the price of sin without redemption is death. Every time a person sins, he has to offer a sacrifice in his place. The burnt offering symbolizes the Lord Jesus' victory over sin (Leviticus 1); the peace offering (Leviticus 3) symbolizes our union with God through reconciliation; the sin and the trespass offerings symbolize the judgment of God against sin. All sacrifices are a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ who came not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own Blood, He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. (Hebrews 9: 12).

Activities/Discussion Points

Discuss the similarity between Our Lord Jesus Christ and the features required in the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12: 1-14)

- ❖ *Without blemish: "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" (John 8: 46)*
- ❖ *A male: God the bridegroom will put Himself to His bride*
- ❖ *1st Year: In his youth (Best age). Sheep: Meek animal (do not oppose his killer)*
- ❖ *Keep it from the 10th to the fourteenth of the month: the Lord Jesus was kept from Palm Sunday and willingly offered Himself (His Body and Blood) in the great Thursday*
- ❖ *To be killed in the evening: Crucified on the sixth hour and died on the ninth hour*
- ❖ *Took the blood and post it on the 2 side posts and the upper door post (not the lower post door to avoid trampling on it): Honorable blood and the only mark for salvation "I see the blood and pass over you" (Exodus 12: 13)*
- ❖ *Roast with fire: No water to alleviate pain*
- ❖ *Unleavened bread: eat it without holding a sin*
- ❖ *Bitter herbs: Very bitter when eaten but smells very good (who ever eat it should smell the life giving sufferings of the Lord)*
- ❖ *His head with his legs... Nothing to remain from it: His bones are not broken*
- ❖ *Your loins girded: ready for the exodus "from earth to heaven"*
- ❖ *Your shoes on your feet (cleansed from the mud of slavery): The Lord washed His disciple's feet to be ready for the New Covenant*
- ❖ *Your Staff in your hands: ready for fighting Satan*
- ❖ *Eat it in haste: Our life on earth is short. Be always ready*