

Restore Series (3): Sodzo Part 2 // Steve Sutton

Overview

Today will do a bit of a synopsis of the past two weeks – so we are thoroughly grounded in the key concepts that sit at the heart of our series called Restore, as we construct a biblical framework for understanding brokenness and restoration.

Two weeks ago we took a look at the Old Testament concept of ‘shalom’.

Who can remember what shalom is?

Shalom according to the Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann is ‘God’s dream for the world’. It’s a beautiful word meaning: *Wholeness, harmony, wellbeing, healing, and prosperity. It points to a world in which ‘nothing is broken, and nothing is missing’.*

All things as God intended them to be.

What were the two other key Old Testament words?

Righteousness and justice are two of the most significant themes in the First Testament. They appear some 900 times.

For Christians righteousness is primarily viewed as inward and upward. Righteousness tends to be about living a moral life and our relationship with God. But the Jewish understanding of righteousness focuses on the outward – it's about social and environmental responsibility – how we care for others and the land.

The Hebrew word 'justice' means "to put things right, to intervene in a situation that is wrong and fix it."

When we live righteously – care for others and creation and act justly – when we work toward putting those things, which are wrong to right we usher in shalom.

An equation: righteousness + justice = shalom

Isaiah 32:16-17

The Lord's justice will dwell in the desert,
his righteousness live in the fertile field.
The fruit of that righteousness will be peace (shalom)...

There was another important Hebrew term we looked at: tikkun olam

Historically, what developed over time in Israel was a concept called 'Tikkun Olam'. Tikkun Olam combined the ideas of shalom, righteousness and justice. It's a term

which means ‘the repairing, restoring, healing of the world’ and is what Jesus called the Kingdom of God.

It’s important that we learn to interpret the New Testament from a Jewish perspective. Although the NT is written in Greek, the writers of the New Testament letters: Paul, Matthew, Peter and James etc were Jewish. They wrote with the dominant OT themes of shalom, righteousness, justice and tikkun olam in mind.

Last week we introduced the New Testament equivalent of shalom – what was it appears 118x
? = the Greek word ‘sodzo’ meaning ‘save or saved’

What does sodzo encompass?

Sodzo: Protect, heal, deliver, make whole, make well, rescue, restore

A helpful way to think about ‘salvation’ is to think about the word’s Latin origins ‘salve’. A salve is an ointment that promotes healing.

We said that sodzo is used to refer to be saved, restored or healed in a number of different areas: **What were they?**

Forgiveness of sins

Freedom from wrath

Physical healing

Mental/emotional healing

Deliverance from demons (addiction)

Coming home (inclusion in community)

The restoration of society and the earth – next week

Salvation is both **personal and social**. It is **holistic** covering every aspect of the human condition and the world in which we live.

Cruise ship illustration – you buy a ticket for a trans Tasman trip from Melbourne to Auckland. You get onboard and for the three-day journey you stay in your cabin. The ship begins to dock at Auckland Harbour and as you are getting ready to disembark one of the Stewards asks how you enjoyed the trip. How was the food?

Food! I've sat in my cabin eating the sandwiches I brought with me. I didn't realize food and entertainment were included in the ticket.

Imagine the disappointment – the lavish banquets you'd missed out on – they were all yours but you thought the ticket was just to get you to your destination.

We can limit salvation to something that just gets us to the other side, without appreciating its depth and breadth.

“The work of salvation, in its full sense, is (1) about whole human beings, not merely souls; (2) about the present, not simply the future; and (3) about what God does through us, not merely what God does in and for us.” **NT Wright**

The gospel of the Kingdom is ‘not just information on how one goes to heaven after death... but rather... a vision of what life can be in all its dimensions.’ **Brian McLaren**

Salvation is now

‘Sodzo’ is very much rooted in the here and now of this world. We miss the depth and breadth of salvation because we have a tendency to associate ‘being saved’ with getting somewhere when we die – rather than something we get to experience on the journey of life.

A view of salvation as something primarily for the next world can lead to Christians living irresponsibly. A well-known American preacher said, *“I know who made the*

environment and he's coming back and going to burn it all up. So yes, I drive an SUV."

This attitude shows a lack of understanding concerning shalom, tikkun olam (the repair or healing of the earth) and sodzo.

The biblical concept of salvation very much focuses on this world, not the next. Salvation is central to the Bible but life after death is not.

A brief history of the afterlife

The idea of an afterlife did not emerge until nearly the end of the Old Testament writings in the last chapter of the Book of Daniel, which was written in 165 BCE.

That means for all the previous centuries, people of ancient Israel did not believe in life after death. Going to heaven when they died was not the motive for the ancient followers of God. The central figures of the Old Testament such as Abraham, Moses and David had no concept of a life beyond this life.

In the Old Testament, a word that appears frequently in reference to the afterlife is the word 'sheol'. The word

simply means “grave” or “place of the dead” and in the Old Testament it’s where everyone went after they died – good and bad, everyone ended up in the same place – ‘sheol’.

By the time Jesus stepped on the scene, two centuries after Daniel, the majority of Jews did believe in life after death. The reason for this growing belief was the Jewish experience of oppression and persecution. Initially, the afterlife was for Jewish martyrs who suffered because of their loyalty to God. The promise of an afterlife was compensation for being killed in faithful service to God. This was then extended beyond martyrs to include others who were part of the Jewish community.

Jesus believed in an afterlife but it wasn’t a significant topic of teaching for him. His message wasn’t about how to get us to heaven but how to get heaven here on earth. Remember the Lord’s Prayer – ‘Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’ The focus of Jesus was on the transformation of lives in the present.

Paul the apostle also believed in an afterlife:

But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” **1 Cor. 15:51-54**

For both Jesus and Paul the afterlife was an afterthought – neither saw salvation principally in terms of the next life. This morning I’d just like to briefly highlight three things about sodzo: salvation is for today, it is a gift and it requires a response from us.

Salvation is for today

The story of Zacchaeus

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will

pay back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him,
“Today salvation has come to this house...” **Luke 19:8-9**

For he says, “In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation. **2 Cor 6:2**

Salvation is a gift

Salvation is God’s gift to us. It originates and comes from God.

Ephesians 2:4,5 & 9 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved... For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.

It is God who:

Forgives sin

Delivers us from wrath

Physically, mentally and emotionally heals

Delivers from demons (addiction)

Brings us home (inclusion in community)

Restores society and the earth

Without God none of this would be possible. However, God's salvation also involves us.

Saint Augustine, 'God without us will not, as we without God cannot.'

Without our response, little or nothing would change in our lives or the world. Salvation – healing, wholeness, restoration is the work of God but we need to respond.

Specifically, salvation involves our response of faith – this applies to both the personal and social dimensions of salvation.

But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.

Hebrews 10:39

And Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." **Luke 7:50**

For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. **Rom. 10:10**

For you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. **1 Peter 1:9**

Faith is trusting God to act. It is our affirmation of what God has said and acting as if what God has said is true.

Conclusion

Let me challenge you this week to think about how you could respond in faith to