

The uniqueness of christian salvation term paper

[Religion](#), [God](#)



1. 0 Introduction

Christianity stands out from the rest of the many and diverse religious beliefs that exist in the world today. According to Buntin (nd) in the myriad of religious beliefs today the idea of salvation is common albeit being defined or even termed differently. The concept of salvation from all the religious beliefs implies reconciliation of humanity to God (deity). The basic principle is that the sin and wickedness of man has separated him from his maker thus the need for salvation. As earlier mentioned to many religions salvation means different things including oneness with deity, righteousness, perfect nothingness, enlightenment, oneness with the infinite, freedom from the power of evil and sin and many other definitions.

Despite the diversity and variety of religions that exist in our vast world with regard to salvation, there are basically two paradigms: that of works and that of grace as a means through which mankind is saved. Most of the world religions are based on the principle of humans undertaking certain task(s) in order to be rewarded, saved or achieve a goal. The task as well as the reward may vary from one religion to another. The ultimate reward in most religions is to get to a place (paradise, nirvana, heaven) of infinite peace (shalom), where the humans will be free from all the problems (sin, guilt, sickness, war, hunger, pain and even death) plaguing humanity in the present world. What distinguishes the Christian salvation from the rest of the religions is the fact that it is the only religion where salvation is not achieved through human efforts but through grace by faith. In other words the world religions are built on the foundation of human works/efforts to attain

salvation while the Christian salvation is based on the premise of grace (the unmerited favor of God). The Christian salvation presupposes that man is in bondage and as such can do nothing to be free or merit the favor of God. Salvation is purely the work of God through the sacrifice of His son Jesus Christ motivated by His love (agape) for mankind. This paper will therefore seek to establish the uniqueness of human salvation by exploring various aspects. The paper will explore the human problem i. e. guilt, bondage, alienation from God and others, the person and work of Christ as relates to salvation, and briefly create a distinction on how Christian provides a solution to human problems like no other religions.

2.0 The problem of mankind

According to the Bible man was created in the image of God his creator (Gen. 1: 27) implying that at the time of creation man was perfect (since God is perfect). In fact at the end of creation the Bible records that God looked at everything He had made and it was good (Gen 1: 32). In other words God created a world that was perfect and man had fellowship with God. In the very middle of the Garden of Eden God put two trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2: 9) and gave man permission to eat of every tree save for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2: 16-17). This was the first ever commandment given to man by God. It is worth noting that God gave man a choice; in other words the Christian faith believes in an all-powerful God who gives men a choice in matters regarding life and death. Of important to note is the fact that the consequences of partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was death. A keen theologian would note that there at the very spot there was the tree of life

from which man was not prohibited to eat; thus implying that man had a choice of eternal life and death. The same choice of life and death was presented to the children of Israel by Moses (Deut. 30: 15-19).

Unfortunately through the temptation of the devil (Gen. 3: 1-10) man decided to disobey God and it of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thus sin entered the world. The entry of sin into the world brought in the many problems that humankind faces up to date. Notable in this portion of scripture is that sin brought in guilt and shame which was why man had to hide from God. Notice that in Gen. 2: 25 Adam and Eve were naked but not ashamed but in Gen. 3: 7 and 10, after disobeying God, they were ashamed and even hid from the presence of God. Before sin Adam and Eve had perfect relationship with God but now the very voice and presence of God made them hide out of guilt and shame. This is the first instance we see man alienate himself from God. Later in the story God pronounced curses upon mankind and threw him out of the Garden of Eden; this again being symbolic of man's alienation from God.

As result of the sin of Adam and Even man is born in the world in a state of sin. In other words humanity was condemned in its entirety and the consequences of sin befell all men so that death, which was not part of God's original plan, was came to all men (Rom. 5: 12). Prime among the consequences of sin is death which is variously described in the bible as alienation from God and eternal damnation (prov. 10: 16; Rom. 6: 23). The initial plan of God was that man would dwell and Rule with Him forever thus He gave man the dominion over all that was on earth (Gen. 1: 28).

Remember man had the right to eat of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden which would have guaranteed him eternal life with His maker. This point is important because as we will see this later God put in place mechanism to restore man to this place. Therefore according to the bible “ all have and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3: 23). Falling short of God’s glory simply means that man in his sinful state is alienated from the grace and presence of God and thus needs redemption to return to that position. There are those who are of the school of thought that it is not fair or even possible that we could be sinners simply because of the sins of our ancestors. This school of thought presupposes that we can only be sinners if we sin but the Biblical view is that if we claim that we have not sinned then we call God a liar (John 1: 10). In other words in God’s eyes we are all sinners and need redemption.

Sin therefore held man captive and alienated him from God so that through sin the relationship between man and God turned from one of fellowship and friendship to one of enmity (Col. 1: 21). Man is therefore born an enemy of God and in a desperate need of restoration to God. According to the bible man has no power, of and by himself, over sin and eternally struggles to attain the state of righteousness (being right with God). In his epistle to the Romans Paul alludes to this struggle when he says that he finds himself doing that which he does not want to do and that he does not do what he wants to do. In other words he struggles to be righteous in his actions but fails miserably and he concludes by saying that no one but Christ can (Rom. 7: 15-23). This is indeed the disparate state and tragedy of mankind and thus the need for salvation. As a result of this human state God has put in

place the process of redemption which can best be understood by exploring the person and the work of Christ.

3. 0 The person and the work of Christ

Following the fall of man God instituted a redemption plan to rescue man and restore the original fellowship that existed between Him and man. It all began in the Garden of Eden by God asking man where he was (Gen. 3: 9), by so doing God was giving man a confess his sin. Instead of confessing there sin and repenting Adam and Eve started a blame game. The Bible is full of redemptive measures instituted by God to restore the original state, from the sacrifice of animals to the giving of the law. The very first sacrifice in attempt to redeem man was when God slain an animal to make coats for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3: 21). There after we see many sacrifices being offered by the Leviticus priests to atone for the sin of. Suffice to say the animal sacrifices were not sufficient in dealing with the problems of mankind (Heb. 10: 3-4). Another important in the journey of redemption was the giving of the Law to Israel through Moses. The law was given to man with an aim to regulate and instruct the relationships between man and God and among men. Paradoxically the law that was meant to redeem man ended being a form of bondage (Rom. 7: 1-7). The law and animal sacrifices having failed to solve the problem of man God had to institute another plan to save mankind.

3. 1 The Person and Nature of Christ

The next step was the ultimate sacrifice that of God's own son. The Bible declares that " for God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in Him should not die but have eternal life" (John 3:

16). This declaration not only introduces the sacrifice of God but the nature of Christ. Christ was not created or born like any other child. He was the very son of God having being divinely conceived by Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1: 18). At this point it is important to note that Christ was there before everything was created and He was not only with God but was God (John 1: 1-14). The deity of Christ is further expressed in the fact that he participated in creation; " everything was made by and through Him and without Him nothing was made (col. 13-17). Christ was the very express image of God and in Him was the fullness of God. Therefore Christ was and still is one hundred percent God. Christ is part of the Holy Trinity made up of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. In his letter to the Philippians Paul says clearly that Christ though being in form God He did not consider it robbery to be equal with God (phil2: 6). Here Paul clearly indicates that Christ was in form God. Another aspect that indicates that Christ was and is indeed God was that He forgave and still forgives men. In deed one of the things that the Pharisees and Sadducees accused Christ was that He forgave men a prerogative of God.

Christ was not just divine in nature but was also human. The Bible says that the word became flesh and dwelt among us (John1: 15). He did not take the form of an angel but came as the seed of Abraham (Heb. 2: 16). It is important to note that Christ was not forced to take the form of man but choose to take the form of a servant and submitted to death even the death of the cross (Phil. 2: 7-8). He was sent in the likeness of man (Rom. 8: 3). He was born of humans and He went through the normal life. Christ was hungry, felt pain and even slept just like all humans. It is important to note that

Christ was not just human for a specific reason. Christ became man so that He could understand us (Heb. 4: 15); in that form Christ could and still can understand our infirmities because He was tempted in every way that we are. The agony of Christ before and on the Christ, in my opinion, is perhaps the greatest testament to His human nature. Therefore Jesus Christ was 100% man and 100% man which is a paradox to both scholars and laymen. Other religions for instance Islam contend with this nature of Christ. Islam acknowledges Christ as a prophet and not God or even the son of God; the religion argues that God cannot give birth. So why then did God send His son into the world in the Human form?

3. 2 The work of Christ

The main reason why Christ came into the world was so that He could pay the price for our redemption. According to the Bible the soul that sins must of necessity die (Ezekiel 18: 20): having earlier established that we were born sinners then it is logical to conclude that we ought to have died. In deed in various epistles of Paul we were dead in our sin. So Christ came that he may take the penalty of our sins that we may be free from the bondage of sin. This was clearly prophesied before He actually came that would bare our infirmity, our sorrows, our grief and our transgressions (Isa 53: 3-10). It pleased the Father to bruise Him and to pull all our Transgressions upon Him and in fact His soul was a sacrifice for our sins (1 pet. 2: 23-25).

It is important to note that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin (Heb. 5: 1-3; 9: 22). He was a high priest who unlike other high priest before Him did not offer animal sacrifices for the atonement of

sins but instead offered Himself as a sacrifice. Christ was sinless yet He died thus He took our place being the perfect sacrifice for the atonement of our sins. Also having gone through the normal Human life and temptation Christ, who now is our mediator, is able to understand us and empathize with us. It is important to also state that Christ actually offered Himself for our redemption and died the painful and shameful death of the cross that was reserved for the worst criminals of the time (phil. 2: 8; Heb. 9: 26; 10: 18). He offered Himself once and for all that he may free us from sin therefore through His death on the cross He set us free from the power of sin. It is in Christ that we have redemption through the blood He shed on the cross and have been forgiven us our sin so that we no longer belong to the kingdom of darkness but have been translated to the kingdom of light (col. 1: 14).

Suffice to say that salvation, the Christian way, is not the work of man but purely the work of God. However in order for man to benefit from the work of God and thus be saved (Rom. 10: 9). This portion of scripture clearly states that the only role of man in the process of salvation is to believe in his heart and confess. In addition to this God is the one who enables us to live in a way that is commensurate to the demands and the dictates of the faith. In simple terms we receive salvation by grace through faith (not works) and by the same grace we are sustained (phil. 2: 13; Eph2: 8-10). Through salvation we have become the sons of God once again just as Adam in the genealogy of Christ is referred to as the son of God (Luke 3: 38; Gal. 3: 26; 4: 7).

Christ did not just come to die for our sins; else He would have died at birth. Christ lived among men for approximately 33 years. During His time on earth Christ taught the principles of God's kingdom making disciples that were to

later further His teachings. Other teaching Christ amongst men to set an example of the Christian lifestyle (1pet2: 21; phil. 2: 5). Christ therefore became our role model for the Christian living. Going back to the very beginning Christ came that He may reconcile man and all creation to God (col. 1: 20-21). The very purpose of the coming of Christ was to return man back to the place where Adam was before sin. Critical to note at this point is that God gave Adam and Eve the right to eat of the tree of life (Gen. 2: 16-17), when they sinned He sent them out the Garden of Eden so that they would not partake of the tree (Gen. 3: 23-24). After salvation and victorious living man will be allowed to of the tree of life (Rev. 2: 27; 22: 2; 22: 14). This essentially implies that the work of Christ was to return man to the original plan and placement of God.

4. 0 How salvation solves Human problem like no other religion

In order to appreciate how Christian salvation solves the human problems like no other it is important to briefly look at the other religions. Suffice to say in the limited space it is impossible to look at all religions but the three major religions (Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism) acknowledge that man needs salvation. While Buddhism and Hinduism attribute the need for salvation to being caught in the cycle of birth, death and rebirth (Samsara or Samskara), Islam and Christian attribute the need for salvation to sin. Christianity considers sin as inherited from Adam as well as man's commission and omission sin while Islam considers sin as failure to fulfill the requirements of the Qur'an.

According to Hinduism and Buddhism salvation is achieved through man's efforts, works and rituals. Similarly Islam emphasizes on adherence to Allah's commandments the five pillars of faith. Paradoxically the Islam also states that one has to rely on the Mercy during the final Judgment. Conversely the Christian salvation is based on grace through faith. As we all may have experienced adherence to a certain set of laws and regulations is a big struggle. We seem to be inherently inclined to disobey therefore instead of solving the problem of Humanity other religions aggravate the problem by setting demands that man must meet. Since men obviously disobey he is caught in a viscous cycle of guilt. Christian salvation is based on grace with the emphasis being the work of Christ on the cross and the unmerited favor of God thus the guilt of not meeting the requirements does not plague the Born again Christian. The Christian salvation is therefore unique with several respects. First it is based on grace; second it is based on the person of Christ the son of God who died for human sins and resurrected on the third death (a claim not found in any other religion). Indeed the birth, philosophies, death and resurrection of Jesus are unique in comparison with other religious figures. Thirdly being based on grace and not works the Christian salvation gives some form of certainty and assurance.

References

Buntin, C. T. (nd). Justified by Faith. Retrieved September 15, 2011, from Bible. org: <http://bible.org/seriespage/saved-grace>

D'Costa, G. (2000). The Meeting of the Religions and the Trinity. New York: Orbis.

Eliasi, M. A.-H. (1991). The Holy Quraan. Delhi: Arish Company.

<https://assignbuster.com/the-uniqueness-of-christian-salvation-term-paper/>

John, S. K. (2010, February 10). What is so unique about ' Salvation' in Christianity? Retrieved september 17, 2011, from Things above:

<http://thingsabove.info/?p=147>

Macleod, D. (1998). *The Person of Christ (Contours of Christian Theology)*. Edinburgh: IVP Academic.

The New International Version (2001). Holy Bible