

HISTORY OF SALVATION AND THE PROPHETS
SESSION #17

Prayer: Hilary of Poitiers (p.260)

Image: Holy Fathers Enoch and Elijah

Homework: CCC 1680-1690

Catechism Search under: Demon ; Exorcism

SALVATION HISTORY:

CCC Defines Salvation as: The forgiveness of sins and the restoration of friendship with God, which can be done by God alone.

Salvation History, therefore, is the historical accounting of God's activity in the world as He reveals and restores the image of humanity to the state of perfection and friendship through the liberation and forgiveness of sins. The prophets testify to this history and the Saints offer evidence of this perfection and friendship.

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS:

Abel	Eschatological Judge as the rightful heir to Adam
Enoch	God's Righteousness and wisdom against the rulers of this world
Noah	Caretaker of creation and image of obedience and faith
Melchizedek	Judge of the godless (from the prophet Isaiah)
Abraham	Father of Nations
Job	Model of the spiritual life: Purgation of the soul and purification
Pharaoh's Daughter	Advocate of the oppressed
Moses	Liberator of the captives and Law-giver
Joshua	First forerunner of Christ: Guide into the Promised Land
King David	Established God's throne on earth; serves at the right hand of God
Jonah	Voice of the penitent
Jeremiah	Embodies the nation
Elijah	Zealous defender of God
Ezekiel	Bears the sins of the people

NOTES ON EZEKIEL IN THE ROLE OF SALVATION:

As a prophet who stands in solidarity with humanity, Ezekiel is a son of man who is chosen to take on the sins of his people, and swallow the divine words of judgment, souring his own stomach (3:1). He is bound and taken from his encounter with God, commanded into captivity within the walls of his own house, as Israel will be stolen from their lands and held captive in their own homes (3:25). Ezekiel's head is shaven, his glory removed, and one third of his hair burned, as Jerusalem, the city of Israel's glory is burned. A second third is sewn into the hem of his cloak, and the final third then scattered in the wind, as Israel is scattered into alien lands (5:1-4). His beloved wife dies, and he suffers but is not allowed to mourn for her death, as Israel should not mourn for the death of her beloved city Jerusalem (24:15-23). Within these acts of solidarity, Ezekiel as a son of man also becomes a vessel embodying the role of the Divine. In shaving his head, and scattering his glory, Yahweh is torturing himself, and distressing His own heart by removing his glory in Israel (18:21-32) and scattering them to the falls of the earth.

Through the prophets, it was made clear that God invites people to take part in the work of salvation. This is the portrait of an intimate God who longs to be with His people and invite them to participate in the work of His hands. But Christ being born in the flesh opened a radical change to historical salvation. He was not merely a participant, but the author and means of salvation itself. It was his sacrifice that completed the work of salvation and toward which all that had been happened before had been pointing. Again, the prophets help us to see how he was the one to complete the work that they had shared in.

MIRACLES OF JESUS (XXXIII)

Healing of:

Leper, sick, blind, paralyzed, mute

Exorcising Demons (Lk 11:14-15)

Calming of the Storm (Lk 8:22-25)

Withering of the Fig Tree (Mt 21:8-22)

Walking on Water (Mt 14:22-33)

Raising of Jairus' daughter (Lk 8:40-56)

Feeding of the 5,000 (Lk 9:11-17)

MIRACLES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Healing of Naaman (Leper) (2 Kgs 5:10-14)
of Tobit by Raphael (Tob 11:7-8)

Tobit exorcises a demon (Tob 8:1-3)

3-Year Drought by Elijah ((1 Kgs 17:1/18:41-45)

Blossoming of Aarons staff (Nm 17:8)

Withering of Uzziah's hand by Azariah (2 Chron.
26:16-21)

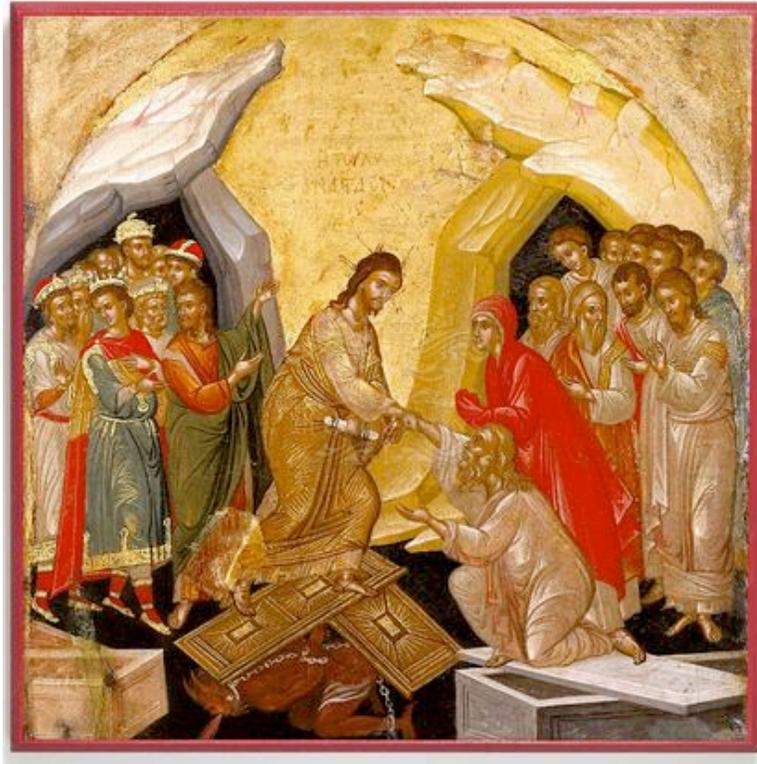
Parting of the Red Sea (Ex 14:21-31)

Raising of the widow of Zarephath's son
(1 Kgs 17:17-21)

the son of Gehazi the Shunamite

(2 Kgs 4:32-37)

Elisha feeds 100 (2 Kgs 4:42-44)



CHRIST DESCENDED INTO HELL AND ON THE THIRD DAY, ROSE FROM THE DEAD

In the Creed, we recount Christ's principle and historical acts of salvation. Among these, is that he descended into Hell and on the third day, he rose again from the dead (CCC 631-658).

Prior to his coming, the gates of heaven were not yet opened to man. This means that no one who lived before Christ, ascended into heaven before him, including the prophets. Jewish tradition held that all who died went to Sheol (Hades), where they waited mournfully and without any ability to influence life in the world. This is something we see often in the Psalms (6:5; 88) that in death none can remember or proclaim God's name and lie forgotten in the grave. There was no separation or distinction between the wicked and the good. While this sounds harsh, remember, first, that there is a Salvation history, it is something that is worked out in the world and in time. We should also remember that there was no judgment. Christ, the Judge who came to Judge the living and the dead, had not yet come, therefore there was no one to pass judgment. So while this means that all went to Sheol in death, it also means that none were condemned. Sheol is not Hell in the image of the eternal condemnation that awaits those who oppose God and die in separation from Him.

After death, Christ descended into Hades. Icons show him raising figures of Adam and Eve from their graves and often times figures of kings and prophets to represent those holy ones who died before his coming, who had been awaiting his coming, and are then raised to heaven with the Risen Lord.

Whereas before Christ all who died went to Sheol, after his resurrection that gates of heaven are opened such that the rewards of eternal life can be immediately opened for those who died after him.

THE SAINTS IN THE WORK OF SALVATION

CCC 828 "By *canonizing* some of the faithful...the Church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness within her and sustains the hope of believers by proposing the saints to them as models and intercessors"

In other words, there are those among the faithful who have lived a life of such heroic virtue and in fidelity to God's grace, that the Church has recognized their union with God, and proclaimed such union. It is by the evidence of their lives that they are held up as examples to follow. But even more, such union with God also bears the fruit of eternal life, meaning that the work of these faithful continues after death in this life. They are the intercessors described in the Book of Revelation. It is through their prayers that they continue to work for the salvation of the Church, universally and of individual souls. When someone takes on a particular Saint as a patron, much like we would describe a patron in this world, this Saint intercedes for them in a special way. The testimony of the faithful, however, suggests that there is more present in the ongoing work of the Saints than simply providing an avenue of prayer. If salvation involves the restoration of friendship with God, then those who serve Him in this work, support the work of friendship. Many have testified to the friendship that is present and offered by the Saints. They are friends and companions, through the Body of Christ, who help us along the way to salvation through their example of heroic virtue, through their prayers, and in active friendship.