

**swzw : to save; to deliver; to rescue; to keep safe and sound; to preserve; to make well,
restore to health**

The above is a sampling of definitions from a couple lexicons. But since this is such an important topic, let's look at the Scripture for how it is used. For pre-Christian usage I will use the Septuagint (LXX).

The word is first used in Gen. 19:17,22. It was used by the agents of the Lord in speaking to Lot and his family that they should "Save (deliver) thine own life (lit., soul)" by leaving Sodom. Lot suggests a small town to escape to; in vs. 22 the agent tells him, "Hasten therefore to be delivered (saved) in that place (thither)." So here we see Lot rescued from Sodom before the judgment comes. To be saved meant to not be destroyed along with Sodom.

The next occurrence is in Gen. 32:8&30. The occasion is Jacob leaving Laban to return to Canaan and his preparation to meet Esau again. He divided his people into two groups, "And said, If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, the other camp will be saved (delivered)." (vs. 8) In vs. 30 Jacob had just finished a night having wrestled "a man," and says, "I have seen God face to face, and my life (soul) was (is) saved (preserved? kept safe and sound? delivered?)." Vs. 30 would seem to carry the same sense of meaning as ch. 19: 17,22, above. In both cases it seems to show that they were not killed. In 32:8, it could mean either not being killed, or captured, perhaps enslaved.

The word is next used in Gen. 47:25, where Joseph, during the famine, has arranged (vs.24) to buy the people of Egypt and their land for Pharaoh, in exchange for seed. They respond, "You have saved (rescued; delivered) us; we have found grace before our lord, and we will be servants to Pharaoh." Here, an economic arrangement was something that would keep them from starving.

Next, it is used in Num. 24:19, in Balaam's fourth oracle, "And one shall arise out of Jacob, and destroy the ones being saved (the survivors; those being delivered) out of the city."

swzw is used 18 times in the book of Judges, ch. 2:16,18 being a good example, "Then the Lord raised up judges, who delivered (saved) them out of the hands of these raiders..." In Judges 3:31 we see that Shamgar "saved (delivered) Israel."

To save time, I will skip the many other places this word is used in the O.T., to the last place, Mal. 3:15, "... and all they who act unlawfully are built up; and they have resisted God, and [yet] they have been delivered (saved)." This verse seems worthy of pondering.

Now to the New Testament. Matt. 1:21, "... He shall deliver (save; restore to health?) His people from their sins (failures; bad shots)." The shadowlands of the O.T., where the word seems to have been used mostly of physical deliverance from an outward situation, are left behind, and instead of Jesus being raised up to deliver His people from the Romans, His deliverance is now within, dealing with their mistakes, their sins.

Yet, in Matt. 8:25 we see that this word still speaks of deliverance, preservation, within a physical context, "And, approaching, they rouse Him, saying, 'Lord, save (deliver) us, we are being destroyed!'" Now, for contrast, let's look at Matt. 24:13, "But the one enduring (remaining under [the load]) into the end (the full execution; the closing act; completion), this one will be delivered (saved)." Delivered (saved) from what? What was the context? Vs. 1-3 set the scene: the destruction of the temple (vs.2) and the end of that age (vs.3). The temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. The situations described in vs. 4-13 (and perhaps farther) could well have been literally fulfilled at that time. But that is for another study.

In Matt. 9:21 we see the woman who had a hemorrhage for 12 yrs. approaching Jesus to touch the tassel of His cloak, "for she said in herself, 'If ever I should only be touching His cloak, I shall be saved (delivered).'" Here we can readily see the aspect of healing suggested by the word. In vs. 22, Jesus said to her, "'Courage,

daughter! Your faith has saved (delivered; given health to) you.' And the woman was saved (delivered; restored to health) from that hour."

We see temporal help given by the Lord in Matt. 14:30 when Peter is walking on the waters. "And, beginning to sink, he cries, saying, 'Lord, save me!' "

Then we have Matt. 16:25, "For whosoever may be wanting to save his soul shall be destroying it. Yet whoever should be destroying his soul on My account shall be finding it." (Concordant Vers.) This statement was made by Jesus after He had just said, "If anyone is wanting to come after Me let him renounce himself and pick up his cross and follow Me." (vs. 24) The context is discipleship, ending with the Son of Man coming and "paying each in accord with his practice." Then He connects this with "the Son of Man continuously coming (pres. part.) within His kingdom." (vs. 28) Here, the word "save" is connected to the disciple's way of life (carrying his cross and living a life of self-denial) and if he destroys his soul-life he will receive pay, or reward. This is definitely not talking about a free gift! Once, again, I suggest that this is the same category as Paul pressing toward the goal for the prize -- "God's calling above in Christ Jesus." (CV) This is more than "mere Christianity," to use C.S. Lewis' term.

The use of swzw in Matt. 27:40,42&49 by the chief priests, scribes, etc. as they mocked Jesus on the cross, is obviously the sense of a physical delivering Himself from the cross.

In Mk. 3:1-6 the context is the healing of the man having a withered hand. In vs. 4, Jesus says, "Is it allowed on the sabbaths to do good or to do evil, to save a soul or to kill?" Here He puts "saving a soul" in the context of healing one's body and compares it to "doing good." In Mk. 5:23, Jairus uses the word in relation to the healing of his daughter, "Coming, Thou mayest be placing Thy hands on her that she may be saved and should be living!" In Mk. 6:53-56 those of the area of Gennesaret "entreated Him that they should be touching Him even if it should be the tassel of His cloak. And whosoever touched it (or, Him) were saved."

In Mk. 10:15-27 we see the disciples use this word in a different context. Vs. 15 speaks of entering the kingdom of God by receiving it "like a little child." This begs the question, "What is the kingdom of God, and what does it mean to enter it?" Here, the context was that "they brought little children to Him that He might touch them" (vs. 13). Jesus then said, "Allow the little children to come to Me ... for of such ones is the kingdom of God ." (vs. 14).

Now in this context, "And at His going out into the road, lo! one certain rich man, running toward Him and falling on his knees before Him, inquired of Him, 'Good Teacher! What shall I be doing that I should be enjoying the allotment of life eonian?' " (CV) Note the response of Jesus: "You know the commandments; do not kill; do not commit adultery; do not steal ..." Jesus is here telling him to keep the law. The man responds that he has kept all these from childhood -- thus, this seems to be nothing new. Jesus responds, "For you, one thing is continuously behind (in the rear -- perhaps as in running a race?)." (vs. 21) Then Jesus tells him to DO something, "Go. Whatever you have, sell, and be giving to the poor and you will be having treasure in heaven." Now this response seems to me to indicate that he would have a reward, not a gift. It responds to his original quest for an inheritance. In vs. 23 Jesus relates this to "entering the kingdom of God ." Then in vs. 24 we see that "the disciples were awe-struck at His words. Yet Jesus, again answering, is saying to them, 'Children, how squeamish it is for those who have confidence in money to be entering into the kingdom of God !' Now they were exceedingly astonished, saying to Him, 'And who can be saved?' " (vs.24-26, CV) So here we have the disciples associating the word saved with the idea of entering into the kingdom of God . And Jesus has said that it is hard to enter the kingdom, in fact, "With men it is impossible, but not with God, for all is possible with God." (vs.27). Thus, it would seem that it was impossible for the rich man (by himself) to give away all his wealth. But the point is still that works, even God-assisted, or God-done, are necessary 1) to enter into the kingdom; 2) to inherit eonian life (vs.17); 3) to be saved (vs. 26). But was Jesus speaking of all this being a reward, or a gift? Are the requirements of being a disciple something that must be done to receive the gift of life, or to receive a reward for meeting these requirements? I think that this is a place

where "rightly cutting" the Word is of great necessity.

In Mk. 10:46-52 we have the record of the healing of the blind man. This man asked Jesus for mercy (vs. 48), and by this the man meant "that I should be receiving sight." (vs. 51) Here, Jesus says, "Go. Your faith has saved you." Once again, we see being saved as meaning being healed. So what did Jesus mean when He said, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved"? (Mk. 16:16)

Just how much have we assumed? Christians randomly quote Scriptures without regard to context, and often with an assumed connotation. I'm sure that I have been guilty of this. Can we get beyond this? It will be possible if God does this for us. May He give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him, the eyes of [our] heart having been enlightened.

Let's look at John 3:13-21. Here the central phrases and concepts are: 1) being saved; 2) being judged; 3) aiwnian life [eonian life -- Concordant Version; age-lasting life -- Diaglott; life age-during -- Young's Lit. Trans.; life age-abiding -- Rotherham; agelasting life -- Tomanek; aeonian life -- Nathaniel Scarlet trans.(1798); life pertaining to the ages -- my translation]

In this entire passage (beginning with vs. 3) we have our word "saved" in association with being born from above (or, begotten back up again) in order to perceive (see) the kingdom of God; with not being judged; and with having aiwnian life. In vs. 5 we see that one must be born of water and of spirit to be "entering the kingdom of God."

As an interesting aside, please note that while Jesus is there on earth, talking with Nicodemus, He is "the Son of Man Who IS IN HEAVEN." (vs.13) Does this give us a clue to the nature and sphere of heaven?

In vs. 14 we see that Jesus associates His necessity of being lifted up (raised aloft; elevated; exalted) with the lifting up of the serpent upon the pole, in the wilderness. Note that, in that time, looking upon the bronze serpent (the serpent in the state of being judged; the figure of the judgment which came of the result of their sin) brought deliverance and healing from the judgment which came upon them because of their sin. Here in John, before one is believing he has already been judged (perf. tense -- vs. 18) for he has not believed (perf.) into the NAME of the only-begotten Son of God, and thus he loves the darkness rather than the Light, for his acts were being (imperf.) evil ones (vs. 19). Thus, in vs. 36 we see that "he who is stubborn to the Son (the one continuously disobeying the Son) will not see Life [when He comes], but the wrath (anger, indignation) of God is continuously remaining (abiding) upon him," and to observe this wrath, just look at the lives of unbelievers (the disobedient) for His anger is currently and continuously upon them.

In vs. 16 we have the classic verse of Christianity. "For thus God loves (or, loved -- aor.) the world, so that He gives (or, gave) His only-begotten Son, to the end that every one continuously believing (pres. part.) into Him may not destroy himself (mid. voice), but may have aiwnian life.... (vs. 17) to the end that the world may be saved through Him."

The text does not say saved from what. Christianity has said that this verse refers to man's "eternal salvation." Having observed the ways in which the word "saved" has been used, I wonder if we can immediately jump to this conclusion? Can we say, using the scenario of the serpents in the wilderness (vs. 14), that He saves the world from the bite of the Serpent (Satan) who figuratively bit mankind through his sting operation in the garden? Thus Jesus saves us from suffering the penalty of our sins, and we are "healed" from the Serpent's bite by looking upon Jesus suffering the judgment of the serpent bite for us, upon the cross. But the notion in tradition is that the main focus of salvation is from future punishment, e.g. in the lake of fire or "hell." Thus far, I fail to see evidence for this conclusion from use of the word swzw in either the O.T. or in the gospels. Rather, I see the word employed to mean deliverance from current situations, or conditions, in this life. But the investigation is not over yet. Give me your input!!!

From the context, I do not see that we can say for sure how Jesus was using the word in John 5:34. In ch. 10 we have His teachings using the figure of sheep and fold. The danger to the sheep is identified first, in vs. 1, as "a thief and a robber." The sheep have the protection of both the Shepherd and their fold. They will not follow an outsider, because they are not acquainted with his voice (vs. 5). Jesus identifies Himself as the Door of the fold, and His sheep can enter into the fold through Him and "he shall be saved, and shall be entering and coming out and will be finding pasture" (vs. 9). This describes the good life for the sheep -- he is protected from thieves, hirelings, wolves, and is provided for by the Shepherd, Who "is laying down his soul for the sake of the sheep." (vs. 11-12)

This good life is described in vs. 10 where He said, "I came that they may have life eonian, and have it superabundantly." (CV) Here the superabundant eonian life is tied to being "saved," in this case, "protected" in the fold, fed, and cared for. Most believers agree, as do I, that this is something we can enjoy now, as well as in the future. But I think the context would stress the "now" aspect in this parable. In regard to my original question, I would point out that all of this good life and protection is "for the sake of the sheep" -- those who are His, those who know Him (vs. 14,15).

In John 11:12, the disciples use the word, regarding Lazarus, to mean that he will get well. In ch. 12:27, Jesus uses the word in regard to His current situation, "And what may I be saying? 'Father, save Me out of this hour'?"

Another aside: Jesus defines aionian life in John 12:50, "And I know that HIS commandment is aionian life." (Diaglott) Also, in ch. 17:3, "And THIS is aionian life: THAT THEY MAY KNOW THEE the only true God, and HIM whom Thou didst send, Jesus Christ." (Diaglott) Neither of these definitions contain the sense of duration for this phrase. I think that perhaps we need to adjust our thinking to align with His thinking.

In Jn. 12:47 Jesus speaks of "saving the world" as the opposite of "judging the world." He goes on to say, in vs. 48, "the word which I speak, that will be judging him in the last day." Here would be an inference that "saving the world" may be that which would keep one from judgment "in the last day," for "repudiating Me and not getting My declarations." (CV)

Now let us move beyond the Gospels to consider the use of this word. Acts 2:21, "And it shall be that everyone, whosoever should be invoking the NAME of the LORD, shall be saved," is a quote by Peter of Joel 2:32, and is associated with "the day of the Lord," in which the sun is converted into darkness and the moon into blood. Now Peter was apparently applying these passages to the happenings on the Day of Pentecost, but does this passage in Acts define the connotations of "being saved" as the evangelicals use the term? I think not, unless you come to this passage with your mind already made up. Consider how Peter used the word in vs. 40, "Be saved FROM THIS CROOKED GENERATION." This seems to me a present application, not future. And now, the next use is in vs. 47, "Now the Lord was continually adding to the church the ones continually being saved (pres. part. pass.)." The deliverance, the salvation, was something that happened to them at that time. There is no inference that it was a deliverance from a future event or condition.

Peter used the term "saved" to refer to a man being healed in ch. 4:9. Continuing the same discourse, he says in vs. 12, "And there is no salvation (deliverance; restoration to health) in any other one, for neither is there any other name, given under heaven among men, within which it is binding us (it necessitates us) to be saved (delivered; restored to health)."

Skipping on to the Philippian prison scene with Paul and Silas, ch. 16:23-34, what makes us think that the warden, or jailor, would have the concept of being saved from hell or the lake of fire following the great white throne judgment off in the indefinite future? The charge against P & S was, "These men are confounding our city. Belonging to the Jews, they are also announcing customs which it is not allowed us to assent to, nor to do, being Romans." Can we assume that this jailor knew the good news about Jesus Christ? His response

was to the great quake, all the doors being opened, and Paul's news to him that everyone was still there. He is shaken, and prostrates himself before Paul & Silas. Then, preceding them out, he said, "O lords (masters, sirs), what is it necessary for me to do, to the end that I may be saved?" It is then that they told him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and they went on, then, to speak the word of the Lord to him, and he, together with his family, is instantly baptized. But my thinking is that, prior to their speaking the word of the Lord to him, he may have had a different purpose for inquiring after salvation. He may have thought them to be gods, and was in fear for his life. He may have thought he would be in trouble with the city government -- remember, he was about to take his life. Paul would have given him a greater view of the term, from sharing the Word with him, but I think he would have been seeking deliverance from his present situation.

"Saved" is next used by Paul in Acts 27:20&31. Here it is in relation to a then present danger, a great storm which resulted in their shipwreck.

Next is Paul's use of this word in his epistles. In Rom. 5:9-10 he says "we shall be saved IN HIS LIFE." Paul began this passage speaking of something different, something that was completed in the past, saying, "Being, then, justified out of faith, we continuously have peace toward God, through our LORD, Jesus Christ, through Whom also we have had admission (access), by the faith, into THIS GRACE within which we have stood and now stand, and we are continuously boasting (glorying) upon an expectation of God's glory." (vs. 1-2) Then in vs. 5 we see that "God's love (or, the Love of God) has been poured out within our hearts through [the] Holy Spirit (or, through holy spirit) -- the One being given to us." We are here encountering a different arena: being justified -- a term of legal status and relationship to God; His love in our hearts -- the sphere within us (the kingdom of Love within us??). Vs. 6 tells us that He "died in behalf of (for the sake of) irreverent (impious, ungodly) ones." -- His work was in relation to our condition. Vs. 8 gives a second witness -- we were sinners. Again, condition. Vs. 9 returns to the subject of justification -- our status, our new condition -- and tells us that this condition is "within His blood," and that "THROUGH HIM we shall be saved (delivered, rescued) from anger (wrath; internal swelling emotion)." Vs. 10 also brings up the fact that "we were reconciled to God through His death" -- once again, relationship.

Now within this context involving 1) our relationship to God; 2) our condition; 3) our legal status, we have this concept of being "saved." Now this term is in the future tense, but how future is it? It is being "saved in His life," which is something which we are given, and which we now have. Now that we are given this life, Paul tells us in Phil. 2:12,13, "You must continually work down (be effecting) your own salvation with fear and trembling, for God is the One continuously working (energizing, operating) within you both to will and to work (operate, energize), for the sake of good pleasure (good thoughts; delight)." This puts "being saved" into our current situations, in this life. That good thoughts and pleasure are the results, or the end in view, this salvation seems to be an interior work, yet one that will affect our current situation. Recall John 3:36, that "God's anger (wrath) is continually remaining (abiding) upon" one who "disobeys -- is unbelieving toward, refuses to trust in, disregards, is not subject to -- the Son." (Amp.) In areas of our lives where these things may yet apply to us, through Him we will be saved from the anger (Rom. 9) that remains upon those areas. He is faithful to judge us. Paul tells Timothy (I Tim. 1:15), "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, foremost of whom am I."

Now in the context of the above verses, could not the "saving" be from the situations in this life, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual? Deliverance from the "strong men" in our lives.

James 1:21 speaks of "the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls." Now this takes my thoughts back to Matt. 16:24-26 and the injunction to His disciples that they must destroy their souls in order to find them. In fact in Mk. 8:35 Jesus says that destroying one's soul for His sake, and the gospel's, is the way to save it. Such activities are the work of this life.

Then we have Jude 23 where we "must continually be saving (delivering) [some], in fear snatching them OUT OF THE FIRE, hating even the garment having been stained from the flesh." This delivering of some to whom

we must be continually showing mercy and continually discerning (vs. 22), is an activity in this present life. They are presently in the fire, else we could not continually be delivering them out of the fire, even as we are hating their presently stained garments. It was in their then present life "that the LORD once delivered (saved) a people out of Egypt's land; the second time He destroyed the ones [that] did not believe (the ones not being persuaded)." Note that those of this second category did not retain the state of being "delivered" since they were later destroyed. This would be true of the children of Israel who God sent into slavery in Babylon: while they were there they were not in the state, or condition, of being "saved." They were in bondage.

"My brothers, if a certain one among you may be led astray (caused to wander) from the Truth, and a certain one may turn him back, you must know that this one turning back a sinner out of the straying (wandering) of his way, will deliver (rescue, save) a soul out of death, and will cover the fullness (a multitude) of sins." (Jas. 5:19,20, JPM trans.) The one here being rescued has wandered into the same condition as the one in Jude 23. He is now strayed into death (for the Truth is also the Life, and the Way from which he has wandered).

In I Cor. 5, concerning the one who had his father's wife, Paul tells them "to give up such a one to Satan, unto the destruction of the flesh, to the end that the spirit may be delivered (saved) in the day of the Lord." (vs.5) This seems to speak of a present judgment, yet with an end in mind of a future situation and time (the day of the Lord) when he will be rescued from this judgment, when the judgment has done its work.

In I Cor. 1:18, Paul speaks of the cross being God's power "to us, the ones being continuously saved (delivered)." Then in vs. 21 he says, "God chose through the nonsense of the message proclaimed" (Wms.) "to save (deliver) those continuously believing." This, once more, sounds like a present-life work and result.

I do not wish to belabor the point, but I also do not wish to overlook other significant passages. So, if you are of like mind, let us look at verses which speak of the Savior, and of salvation. In Lu. 1, the agent Gabriel is sent to Mariam to tell her that she shall bring forth a Son. He tells her that His name will be called Jesus, the Gr. equivalent of Joshua, meaning Yah saves, or delivers. He says that Jesus will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. Then he tells her what He will do: God will give Him the throne of David, His father, and He will reign over the house of Jacob into the eons, and of His kingdom there will be no end (vs.32,33). In vs. 46, Mariam begins her praise saying, "My soul is magnifying the LORD, and my spirit exults in God my Savior, for He looks on the humiliation of His slave." Note that she sees this word from the Lord as affecting her present condition in this life: humiliation (the state of all mankind prior to the work of Jesus). Her focus continues on how this will effect her: "all generations will count me blessed" (vs. 48); "the Powerful One does great things for me" (vs. 49). In vs. 50 she declares "His mercy is into generations and generations." Vs. 51-54 speaks of His works in others -- from potentates to the humble; from the hungry to the rich -- ending with how "He supported Israel, His boy." She finishes her praise "according as He spoke to our fathers; to Abraham and to his seed into the age." From this passage one could assume that what she perceived was that God was going to revive His work with His people, as He had done since Abraham. I can see nothing here that shows that she perceived His work to go beyond helping her and her people in this life, on this earth. The message of the agent to the shepherds, in 2:10-12, was "good news of great joy which will be for the entire people, for today was brought forth to you a Savior, Who is Christ, the LORD ..." Here again, the message was to and for Israel, the entire people. However, the Samaritans had an expanded revelation and realized the Jesus is "truly the Savior OF THE WORLD, the Christ." (John 4:42)