

Vicarious Sacrifice: Imputation & Justification; Religious Jews Sought Salvation through Works: Pharisees v. Jesus: Oral Law v. Mosaic Law; Abram Saved in Dispensation of Gentiles, Gen 15:6; Paul Confirms Salvation by Grace Rom 4:3–5 cf. Gen 15:6; Book of Life v. Books of Works; Salvation Credits Believer's Account with God's Righteousness

12. **Imputation and Justification** results in vindication before the Supreme Court of Heaven. The Jews sought righteousness through works associated with meticulously keeping the Mosaic Law.

Their obsessive desire to accomplish perfection led to the development of the oral law, a system developed by the post-exilic priesthood which instructed the Jews on how the mandates of the Law could be flawlessly kept.

By the time of the Lord's Incarnation, the Jewish hierarchy ruled the people by imposing upon them the oral law's legalistic restrictions while ignoring the intrinsic message of the Mosaic Law.

The purpose of the Law was to demonstrate that fallen man cannot achieve perfection, while on the other hand, through ritual, that God would provide a grace solution through provision of the Savior.

The Ten Commandments simply cannot be kept for a lifetime. The rituals of the Levitical sacrifices revealed the provision of a coming Messiah.

The religious factions in Jerusalem were constantly trying to trip up Jesus by posing technical questions regarding application of the oral law:

Mark 7:5 - The Pharisees and the experts in the law [scribes] asked Him [Jesus], "Why do Your disciples not live according to the tradition [oral law] of the elders, but eat (bread) with unwashed hands?"

v. 6 - He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied correctly about you hypocrites, as it is written [in Isaiah 29:13]: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.

v. 7 - 'But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'

v. 8 - "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." (NET)

Righteousness cannot be acquired by works but by grace. The Christological shadows of the Mosaic Law revealed the impossibility for man to attain the perfection of Yahweh. Man simply can never measure up because of the imputation of Adam's original sin at physical birth.

Faith alone in Messiah alone enables God to impute to the new believer His own perfect righteousness. This imputation takes place for anyone who believes regardless of the dispensation:

Genesis 15:6 - Then he [Abram] believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. (NASB)

This is a very important verse regarding the issue of salvation and justification:

Abraham is the model of justification. His vindication not only demonstrates the mechanics of salvation but proves as well that salvation follows the same pattern in both Old and New Testaments, both before and after the giving of the Mosaic Law. We in the Church Age receive the righteousness of God at the point of faith in Christ, but so did Abraham in the Age of Israel—and so does every believer from Adam after the Fall to the last believer in the Millennium.¹

Genesis 15:6 reveals that Abram was minus the righteousness of God until he placed his faith alone in Yahweh. If this is the pattern for Abram then it must also be the pattern for everyone else which Paul confirms in:

Romans 4:3 - Now what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

v. 4 - Now to the one who works [for salvation], his compensation is not credited to his account according to grace, but in contrast, according to debt [the more you work for salvation the farther away from it you get].

v. 5 - But to the one who does not work, but believes on Him Who justifies the unrighteous, his faith receives credit for the imputation of divine righteousness. (EXT)

Abram’s birthplace was Ur of the Chaldeans according to Genesis 11:31. He left at about age 30 and Moses’ account in Genesis 15 finds him in Canaan at about age 80. Verse 6 begins with a verb that reveals Abram was saved before he left Ur, the Hiphil perfect of אָמַן (*'aman*): “to believe.”

The Hiphil stem is causative active; Abram was caused to believe by the presentation of the gospel; the perfect tense indicates his faith response was an action he produced in the past but with results that continue to the present: “Abram had previously been caused to believe.” Abram was saved during the dispensation of the Gentiles.

In Paul’s quote of this passage, he employs the aorist active indicative of the verb πιστεύω (*pisteúō*). The aorist tense is constative which views the action of believing in its entirety and gathers it into a single whole. The action was Abram’s faith response to the gospel which occurred over a period of mere seconds.

The active voice indicates that Abram had produced the action when he made an independent volitional decision to believe in Messiah. The indicative mood is declarative for a statement of a historical fact.

The object of Abram’s faith is the proper noun יְהוָה (*Yehovah*).²

The member of the Godhead to whom one’s faith is directed is the Second Person, Jesus Christ, who is referred to by Old Testament writers by the nouns YHWH and *'Athonay*, but translated Jehovah and LORD.

¹ R. B. Thieme, Jr., *The Integrity of God*, 4th ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2005), 99.

² “The word refers to the proper name of the God of Israel, particularly the name by which He revealed Himself to Moses (Exodus 6:2, 3). The divine name has traditionally not been pronounced, primarily out of respect for its sacredness. Until the Renaissance, it was written without vowels in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, being rendered as YHWH. However, since that time, the vowels of another word, *'athonay* [אָתוֹנַי], have been supplied in hopes of reconstructing the pronunciation. It is most often rendered as LORD or JEHOVAH” (Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* [Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003], 426).

Context determines which member of the Trinity is referenced, but Roman 4:3 confirms it is Jesus Christ. Moses reports that Abram's faith produced a divine action, the Qal imperfect of the verb **חָשַׁב** (*chashav*): "to reckon, calculate, compute, settle accounts."

Chashav is a bookkeeping term that when understood results in explaining how the grace of God takes our non-meritorious faith in Christ and balances the books containing our debt with the imputation of His righteousness:

The Hebrew verb *chashav* [חָשַׁב] exhibits the element of calculation, with its modifications "account, compute, charge, settle (accounts)," thus "count, value calculate." (p. 230)

The act of accepting faith is finally reckoned as a deciding factor in the relationship with Yahweh. The expression, probably shaped by notions associated with the law of debts, calls the outcome of the events depicted a settlement of accounts in a theological sense, deliberately echoing commercial language. The interpretation of the promise to Abraham found in Genesis 15:1-6 uses such expressions and ideas throughout. The reckoning of belief as *sethaqah* [righteousness] documents the conclusion of the transaction.³ (p. 243)

The Qal imperfect of *chashav* indicates ongoing action. In response to Abram's belief in *Yehovah*, God continuously credits something, i.e., righteousness, to his account.

³ K. Seybold, "חָשַׁב," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 5:230, 243.