

A Study of Salvation based on 1 Peter 3:18-22 among Batak Toba Christians, North Sumatra

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ABSTRACT

Salvation is a very broad subject and very important to understand properly in the Bible. Salvation in Jesus Christ can be responded to by believing in Christ and His work. The understanding of salvation is now understood in universalism, and not a few people or groups have also turned to syncretism. The emergence of many teachers, pastors, and theologians had a great impact on providing different understandings among Christians. Each tribe has a belief in their ancestors, which later becomes a culture or custom. Initially, every Batak culture or custom was inseparable from magical elements. Any rituals or traditional ceremonies performed by certain groups or people are believed to keep them away from danger so that they are fine. But in reality, not a few of them experience the opposite. The initial motivation for getting blessings and safety turns out to be the tribulation or wretchedness that befalls their lives. The purpose of this research is to find out the magnitude of the confirmation of salvation in Jesus Christ. The most dominant dimension determines the confirmation of salvation, and the most dominant background category determines the confirmation of salvation based on 1 Peter 3:18-22 among Batak Toba Christians in Sumatra North. The method used is a quantitative approach using explanatory and confirmatory surveys. Research Results: Confirmation level about salvation based on 1 Peter 3:18-22 is in the high category. The most dominant dimension determining Confirmation about salvation is Preaching the Gospel by Jesus Christ (D3). The dominant background category determining confirmation of safety is age.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Salvation talks about the eternal life that humans will experience after going through times of suffering in the world. The salvation that God does is certainly not something that fails or might fail or something that can be canceled or withheld by anyone. Humans experience destruction not because of the mere failure of God's plan but because humans reject the gift of salvation and choose to live in darkness because of their sinfulness. God saves mankind, and humans, as His creatures, need to know the truth of God's saving work. The Old Testament and New Testament Bibles record evidence of how God saved them, starting from the exodus—until those who lived witnessed the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ to heaven. If only God could do the work of salvation, then the biggest question for humans would be how we could receive that salvation. Because of human sinfulness, He proved His love on the cross, not only for those who lived at the time of Moses, the prophets and apostles but also for us who live in the present and the future (eternity). We as human beings receive salvation by knowing,

God came into the world in the flesh and lived with His own, but in reality, God was rejected by His own. God came to save His people from death. In the book of Genesis 2:17, God said to man not to eat the fruit of good and true knowledge. Because when they eat it, they will die. The wage of sin is death, namely eternal death. But in John 3:16, because of God's love for His creation, He gave His only begotten Son so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal



life. Salvation in 1 Peter 3:18-22 in its simple understanding, is a work of God's redemption of His human creation from the shackles of sin and how we respond to it properly. Some people accept and believe in the death of Christ, who became the human savior. Reformed theology maintains that Christ died with the clear and earnest purpose of saving the elect and the elect only (Berkhof, 2015, p. 209). Meanwhile, Arminians in the Netherlands argue that Christ died intending to make possible salvation for all humans without exception, even though not all humans will be saved (Berkhof, 2015, pp. 209–210). Reformed, Arminian and even Calvinists accept and believe in the death of Christ. They believe that with the death of Christ, humans will have forgiveness of sins and salvation. Salvation, according to the Bible, is God's work in making people free from slavery and sin and bringing them to a situation of glory through Jesus Christ (Arrington, 2015, p. 276). That is, God, who died on the cross, reconciled sinful humans with God. The context of the "reconciliation with death" that Jesus did turn out to be a problem because His deity became questionable. Are faith in Christ and his sacrifice on the cross not enough to save that Christian?

The Toba Batak tribe is a sub or part of the Batak ethnic group originating from the province of North Sumatra, Indonesia. The Toba Batak are a cultural unit that has clans or family names that become their identity or indicate which family they come from. Before the Toba Batak people knew Christianity, the ancestral belief, namely Parmalim, had become a belief of the Batak people from generation to generation (Toba, n.d.). The existence and implementation of Batak Toba culture is often an act that contradicts the Word of God. Many things in Toba Batak culture focus on the spirits of people who have died. Ceremonies and the erection of clan monuments are considered worship of ancestral spirits or the spirits of the dead. The form of worship and respect that they do is done because of an understanding that has been hereditary and is rooted in the belief in the existence of a relationship between humans who are still alive and the spirits of people who have died (*adong pardon ni halak na mangolu dohot Angka Na Mate*; Silalahi, 2004, p. 142), in the beliefs held by the ancestors, they argue that there is a relationship between the living and the spirits of the dead. This relationship is reflected in various traditional ceremonies performed for people who will and have died, such as *manulangi* (toasting those who are about to die), *hamateon* (death), *mangongkal holi* (digging up bones), the feast of the erection of monuments and the annual feast at the clan monuments (Silalahi, 2004, p. 144). The Toba Batak Tribe is an indigenous tribe residing in the North Sumatra region of Indonesia. Sumatra is a tropical area with high biodiversity and is home to many national parks and endemic animals, such as the Sumatran tiger, the Sumatran elephant, and the Sumatran rhino (Siahaan, 1982, p. 45). Despite the cultural diversity and natural beauty of the region, the Toba Batak Tribe has faced various challenges throughout history, including colonialism and harmful stereotypes perpetuated by foreign tourists. However, amidst these challenges, the Toba Batak Tribe has managed to retain its rich cultural traditions and close-knit community. One time, the writer asked about the custom that he did and how he understood his safety. The mother said that there were many things she did without understanding. One of them is about Sahala, who is believed to be able to bless and deliver food to the grave. He thinks that salvation is God's right without understanding how he can be saved. Apart from that, the writer also asked a *malim*, and the conclusion that the writer got was briefly that their culture is in Dalihaan Na Tolu, Salvation is a mystery, Malim is a saint, Si Sisingamangaraja and his followers *parmalim*. There are no saints anymore. For them, Jesus does not fit into the category. Because no one knows heaven because no one has ever been there, he said. So their attitude in life is to do good, and the spirits of the dead are our intermediaries to GOD and do not have holy books that they can read freely. The author then also asks a pastor who is a church leader who no longer follows traditional Batak ceremonies. He said that many of the Batak Customary Culture/ethics conflicted with Bible Truth. They do. Some know but do not want to let go. Some do not know, so they continue to sin. The assumption is that Adat is the most valuable than God. The church must continue to convey the truth. Because even though they claim to have been born again, they do not grow even though Jesus wants us to be the same as Christ. He wanted a seminar to discuss the topic of pagan customs.

The emergence of many teaching and doctrinal influences within the church and Christianity makes people increasingly doubt the truth and validity of the Bible. It is no wonder why people prefer to have spell books or clan *tarombo* (origin areas) books rather than own Bibles. It is not surprising that young people prefer to read novels and other people's interpretations rather than having a printed Bible to read anywhere. One example of a mistake in understanding the Bible is Liberal theologians, theologians who think that God's works in the Bible are only similar to the atmosphere of mythology. That is, Christians in the Toba Batak tribe can just use folklore prevailing in their area and relate it to Bible stories. Liberal theology rejects God's intervention and action in Bible history and stories. The human actions in the biblical narrative are not the works of God. Correct understanding and real confirmation of salvation in Jesus Christ based on 1 Peter 3:18-22, along with the indicators mentioned above, will be outlined in this research, which will help to understand salvation correctly and have good implications in everyday life. In addition, what is of concern in this study is the presence of different background factors among

Batak Toba Christians that influence the understanding and implementation of salvation, such as gender, age, education level, type of work, and marital status.

2. METHOD

In this study, the authors used a quantitative approach. Researchers also use explanatory and confirmatory surveys. This research is also confirmatory by using a representative sample to conclude the population. This study uses exogenous variables and endogenous variables.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

North Sumatra, the region where the Toba Batak Tribe resides, is known for its lush landscapes and fertile soil. It is surrounded by the Indian Ocean in the west and the Malacca Strait in the east, making it a strategic location for trade and cultural exchange. The Toba Batak Tribe is one of the six sub-tribes that make up the larger Batak Tribe in North Sumatra. Understanding the spiritual beliefs of the Toba Batak Tribe is crucial to comprehending their unique culture and worldview. The Toba Batak Tribe is known for their strong Christian faith, which sets them apart from other indigenous tribes in the region (Siahaan, 1982, p. 25). The impact of Christianity on the Toba Batak Tribe cannot be overestimated. Christianity has played a vital role in the salvation and transformation of the Toba Batak Tribe. Christianity has played a vital role in the salvation and transformation of the Toba Batak Tribe, leading them to embrace a new faith and leave behind their animistic beliefs.

Christianity was introduced to the Toba Batak Tribe by German Protestant missionaries in the late 19th century. These missionaries sought to bring salvation and deliverance from what they perceived as the “darkness” of animistic practices. The Toba Batak Tribe embraced Christianity, and it became a central aspect of their identity and community life. The introduction of Christianity to the Toba Batak Tribe marked a significant turning point in their history. The Toba Batak Tribe’s journey to salvation and the embracing of Christianity was not without its challenges. The traditional animistic beliefs deeply ingrained in the Toba Batak culture posed a hurdle to the acceptance of Christianity. However, through the diligent efforts of the missionaries and the willingness of the Toba Batak people to open their hearts and minds, they were able to overcome these obstacles and fully embrace the teachings of Christianity. Faith and transformation have become integral to the identity of the Toba Batak Tribe. Through their newfound Christian faith, the Toba Batak Tribe has experienced a profound transformation in their lives and their community. They have moved away from animistic beliefs and practices, embracing a new set of values and principles rooted in Christianity.

The Toba Batak Tribe’s conversion to Christianity has not only impacted their spiritual beliefs but also influenced various aspects of their culture and way of life. The salvation of the Toba Batak Christians has not only affected their spiritual beliefs but has also had a profound impact on their social and cultural practices. The impact of Christian salvation on the Toba Batak Tribe cannot be underestimated. Christianity has brought about a profound transformation within the tribe, shaping their values, beliefs, and way of life. Christianity has instilled in them a strong moral code emphasizing love, forgiveness, and compassion. Additionally, the introduction of Christianity has led to a shift in the tribe’s cultural practices. They have embraced new traditions and practices that align with Christian teachings, gradually replacing some of their animistic rituals and customs. The salvation of the Toba Batak Christians is needed. Salvation in Hebrew *ye syu ’a* and Greek *sôtêria* means the act or result of deliverance or maintenance from harm or disease, including safety, health, and prosperity. The Bible gives clearer statements about how God provides the basis for salvation, offers it, and how He is the only salvation for mankind. (Douglas, 2011, p. 375). The work of salvation points to knowledge of God (2 Thess. 2:13). God intends that everyone who was destroyed before come alive and have eternity in Christ. God calls His people, justifies them, and glorifies them in His saving work.

4. EXPOSITION OF 1 PETER 3:18-22

4.1. Text 1 Peter 3:18-22

Most of the original text of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and only a small part was written in Aramaic. As for the New Testament, all of the original texts were written in Greek. Holladay and Hayes also add, “Even modern Israelis who speak Hebrew or modern Greeks who speak Greek recognize that the languages of the Bible are not the same as Hebrew and Greek” (Holladay & Hayes, 2006, p. 14).

The text that will be exposed in this dissertation is 1 Peter 3:18-22. The New Indonesian Translation of the Bible classifies this passage into one passage entitled “Suffer patiently”. This passage is not a

stand-alone passage but has a relationship with the passage before and after it. This can be proven from the subject matter of each passage, which shows a connection. However, the researcher will limit the text to be executable according to the pericope limits set by the Bible Society in the Indonesian New Translation of 1997.

4.2. Text Criticism

According to Fee and Stuart, “Apparatus is a textual composition in footnotes which includes important descriptions with manuscript support” (Fee & Stuart, 1989, p. 24).

The textual criticism method used by interpreters is the eclectic method. The Eclectic View holds that “Evidence both external and internal evidence counts, and each is likely to influence the outcome more than the other.” (Sudjono, 2008, p. 26). The nats criticism in verse 18 is a sentence fairy, *peri hamartiōn ephathen* (περι αμαρτιων επηατηεν) which is marked {B} means that this text is actually close to the original, and the word *u'ma/j* (public relations), which is marked {C} means that the Editorial Committee is having difficulty deciding which variant must be placed within the text.

4.3. Temporary Translation

The emergence of various translations can also be influenced by factors from the translator. Anwer Tjen said, “The result of a person’s translation really depends on several factors, for example, the competence of the translator in the language of the source text and the target material, the skills of the translator to return to what he understands from the source text, the assumptions (genre) of the material being translated” (Tjen, 2005, pp. 88).

For Christ also once (απαξ), suffered for sins: The righteous for the unrighteous, that He may bring you who have died in the flesh, and who have been quickened by the Spirit, to God. 19 In spirit He also went and announced to the spirits in prison. Verse 20 To those who had been disobedient before, that is, in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, the patience of God had made Him wait, but few, even these eight souls were saved from the water. Verse 21 ο αντιτυπον νυν | and baptism that saves us, not washing away the uncleanness of the flesh, but answers to questions from a good conscience to God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Verse 22 He has now gone to Heaven and is at the right hand of God.

4.4. Comparative Translation

The comparative translations used in the exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22 are taken from the King James Version (KJV), the New International Version (NIV), the Old Indonesian Translation (from 1972), and the Daily Indonesian Translation (BIS).

Comparison of the translation in the NIV: died = dead, the same as the translation in the BIS, while in the KJV: suffered = suffered. The use of the oldest manuscripts is ‘dead,’ but when viewed from nearby texts, the use of the word ‘suffer’ is more appropriate. The next thing is the word usage *hēmas*, meaning you/you in the NIV manuscripts. Meanwhile, the KJV, RSV, or TB translations translate the word *hama/j* with us/us.

Based on the provisional translation of 1 Peter 3:18, God, who has been killed physically, has been made alive spiritually. In the KJV translation, being put to death in the flesh but quickened by the Spirit = killed in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit. NIV: He was put to death in the body but made alive in the spirit = He was killed in the body but made alive by the Spirit.

Verse 19, ‘Go preach the gospel to the spirits in prison.’ The temporary translation used is ‘to tell,’ in contrast to the NIV and KJV translations, which translate it to ‘preach.’ When compared to 1 Peter 4:6, how can the gospel also be preached to the dead so that they, like all humans, are judged in the flesh but by the spirit and can live according to God’s will? The word ‘gospel’ in the text of 1 Pet 4:6 does exist, in contrast to the text of 1 Pet 3:19. Translation into ‘gospel’ makes some translations maintain the translation ‘preach the gospel.’ The KJV translates preached = preaching.

Based on the diagram above and BibleWorks verse notes, some people might think that would be better interpreted *ασψυχαις βεχτοσ λι, γοιασ αν* attributive to it *ανδτου/της εστιν οσ κτω*, as an appositive for *οσ λιγοι*. Note, however, that *ovli,goi* is explicitly masculine (it has a separate feminine form) and, therefore, must be interpreted as a substantive rather than a feminine attribute, *yucai*. Based on that, it is translated to those who were previously disobedient, that is, when in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, the patience that God had made Him wait, but only a few, even only these eight souls were saved from the water.

5. INTERPRETATION

In this case, the author will interpret the text and explain the thoughts of the writer of 1 Peter and arrange it into an interpretation that is easily understood by today’s readers. Spirits in prison: Peter

seems to be saying that between His death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus preached (or proclaimed His victory) to the spirits of the disobedient (or fallen angels) see 2 Pet. 2:4-5; Gen. 6:1-8) in Noah's day (West, 2016, p. 720). Descend into hell: the original word in the apostolic creed reads *descendit ad inferna* (inferos), which can be translated as "go down into hell" or "go down to hell" (Hadiwijono, 2007, p. 336).

From the opinions of several interpreters above, there are different views on people who die in prison. The difference is also not only in the words of the dead but also in how Jesus preached the gospel to them. Some think 'Jesus descended into hell' means being at the bottom of the earth. However, some interpreters actually say that Jesus did not come down but ascended to show His glory. This means that the prisons of the dead are not below but above. When compared to Rendel Harris' opinion, Jesus didn't really need to do that, but Enoch was sent to convey the news of Jesus' salvation to the angels and people who were in Hades.

6. SALVATION BASED ON 1 PETER 3:18-22

The understanding of salvation is now understood in universalism, and not a few people or groups have also turned to syncretism. Salvation, according to a Biblical perspective, is impossible to fully understand without involving Christ and looking at the stories about God's work in the work of salvation. The saving work that God has done starts from the life of the Israelites in the Old Testament. God promised to bless the descendants of Abraham, God freed the Israelites from slavery to the Egyptians, God made a covenant with the Israelites on Mount Sinai, God built the temple and its sacrificial system, and so on until it led us to Christ and His Lordship. In essence, salvation belongs to God himself,

The Apostles Peter and John emphatically answered the Jewish Religious Court by saying: And salvation is not in anyone but in Him; for under heaven, there is no other name given to men by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12) (Alkitab, 2005, p. 196).

The author understands that safety is a state where we feel comfortable and calm. Circumstances that do not just exist but through a process until we humans are free from the death penalty or the curse of sin, and salvation is the work of God himself.

Based on the Gospel of John 3:16, which says: "For God so loved this world, that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life." Some people think that God's saving work is indeed that simple. And that view doesn't end there. Some others think that with just one person believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, he and his household will be saved (Acts 16:31). However, not a few people have difficulty understanding the salvation that Jesus did. This may have happened because of the difficulty in understanding how God, who became flesh, lived with man, how He who was without sin was made sin, how He died because of sin while He was God, and how He resurrected from the world of the dead. Of course, it is not easy to understand these things.

Based on Genesis 12:1-3, it should be understood that the work of saving was fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The saving vision that God planned for all believers in Baraham's time was also fulfilled in Christ. That is why believing in the story of Jesus, Jesus' Death, and Resurrection is a form of faith for people who have been saved. The gospel (good news/salvation) is preached to all tribes and nations because Christ also died for the salvation of all nations. Death and Resurrection of Christ are the core of the Biblical Gospel because, through Jesus, who is the Messiah, the people of Nazareth and the Descendants of Abraham give hope for the blessings of salvation for all tribes, nations, and languages.

Based on the discussion above, the authors formulate the hypotheses of this study as follows (see Table I for a summary):

TABLE I: A SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH RESULTS

The proposed hypotheses	Research results
1. It is suspected that the level of Confirmation regarding salvation based on 1 Peter 3:18-22 among Christians of the Toba Batak tribe of North Sumatra is in the moderate category.	The level of confirmation about salvation based on 1 Peter 3:18-22 among Christians of the Toba Batak tribe of North Sumatra is in the high category.
2. It is suspected that the most dominant dimension in determining confirmation of salvation based on 1 Peter 3:18-22 among Batak Toba Christians of North Sumatra is Preaching the Gospel by Jesus Christ (D3).	The most dominant dimension in determining confirmation of salvation based on 1 Peter 3:18-22 among Batak Toba Christians of North Sumatra is Preaching the Gospel by Jesus Christ (D3).
3. It is suspected that the dominant background category that determines confirmation of salvation based on 1 Peter 3:18-22 among Batak Toba Christians in North Sumatra is education.	The dominant background category that determines the Confirmation of salvation based on 1 Peter 3:18-22 among Batak Toba Christians in North Sumatra is age.

1. The level of confirmation of salvation based on 1 Peter 3:18-22 among Christians from the Toba Batak tribe of North Sumatra is suspected to be in the moderate category.
2. The dominant dimension determines the confirmation of salvation based on 1 Peter 3:18-22 among Christians of the Batak Toba tribe of North Sumatra, allegedly preaching the gospel.
3. Based on 1 Peter 3:18-22, the dominant background category determines safety among Batak Toba Christians, presumably education level.

7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Toba Batak Tribe's cultural practices have played a fundamental role in shaping their approach to healthcare, well-being, and overall way of life. These practices, deeply rooted in their cultural identity and passed down from generation to generation, reflect a holistic understanding of health that encompasses physical, mental, and spiritual aspects. Despite the influence of Christianity and the changing times, the Toba Batak Tribe has successfully preserved its cultural heritage while integrating elements of its traditional customs with modern practices. The Toba Batak Tribe's traditional medicine system, which has been passed down for generations, is particularly noteworthy. This system, utilized before the introduction of modern medical techniques, remains a crucial aspect of the tribe's health practices. Today, as modern medical techniques become the norm, the study of traditional medicine within the Toba Batak community becomes increasingly relevant. This emphasis on traditional medicine presents an opportunity for anthropological and linguistic studies to explore the intersection of culture and health practices within this community. Additionally, the cultural practices of the Toba Batak Tribe extend to unique traditions surrounding newborn care and various healthcare approaches.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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