I’ve been discussing how Paul understands the significance of Jesus’ death and resurrection for salvation, and have done so by laying out as concisely as I could his two principal “models” of how salvation worked, the judicial and the participationist model. In this post I’ll make some brief concluding comments about the two models, in particular in relation to one another, again from my textbook on the New Testament.

3. Comparison and Contrast of the Two Models

Let me emphasize that the two models of salvation we have been looking at are ways of understanding something. They are not the thing itself. Paul’s gospel is not “justification by faith” or “union with Christ.” These are ways of reflecting on or thinking about his gospel. His gospel is God’s act of salvation in Christ; the models are ways of conceptualizing how it worked.

The way it worked differed according to which model Paul had in mind. In both of them, the problem is “sin.” But in one, sin is an act of disobedience that a person commits whereas in the other it is a cosmic force that works to enslave people. In both models, the solution is provided by Christ’s death and resurrection. But in one, Christ’s death pays the penalty for human disobedience and in the other it breaks the cosmic power of sin. In both models a person has to appropriate the benefits of Christ’s death, but in one it is through faith, that is, through a trusting acceptance of the payment, whereas in the other it is through baptism, that is, through a ritual participation in the victory.

FOR THE REST OF THIS POST, log in as a Member. If you don’t belong yet, GET WITH IT!!!