



SALVATION & REDEMPTION

by

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ARE YOU SAVED?

- ***Did Christ die for our sins?***
- ***Did He pay ransom with His death for our sins? If that is the case, who did He pay ransom to?***
- ***Did He have to die on the Cross for our Redemption?***
- ***Was it really necessary for Christ to die on the Cross?***

EASTERN VS WESTERN UNDERSTANDING? DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

Is there really such a big difference?

Orthodox vs Roman Catholic

Orthodox vs Protestant

What are these differences if they exist?

We need to start somewhere!

DO THE WORDS MATTER?

Diverse Vocabulary:

(σωτηρία) Salvation - deliverance from sin and its consequences or from harm, ruin or loss; verb: **σώζω** = to deliver or protect, to heal or to make whole. (noun: **σώος**)

(λύτρωσις) Redemption - the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil

(ἱλασμός) = Expiation - the act of making amends or reparation for guilt or wrongdoing - Biblical: **Forgiveness** of sins

(ἱλαστήριον) = Expiation - Biblical: **Forgiveness** of sins

(εξιλέωσις) = Expiation - Biblical: **Forgiveness** of sin

Atonement - reparation for a wrong or injury (some people use this term to translate **εξιλέωσις**)

Propitiation - the action of propitiating or appeasing a god, spirit, or person or trying to win his/her favor (some people use this term to translate **ἱλαστήριον**)

Ransom - a sum of money or payment demanded or paid for the release of a prisoner

Incarnation - the embodiment of God the Son in human flesh as Jesus Christ

Deification - the transformation of humanity to a perfected state in "the likeness of God"

ἵλασμός & ἱλαστήριον

Biblical use

- * ὅτι παρὰ σοὶ ὁ **ἵλασμός** ἐστίν. (Psa. 129:4)
But there is **forgiveness** with thee,(130:4) (RSV)
- * **ἵλασμός ἁμαρτιῶν forgiveness of sins**
- * αὐτὸς **ἵλασμός** ἐστίν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν
- * '(Christ) himself is the means by which our sins are **forgiven**' (1Jn 2:2) (RSV)
- * ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς **ἱλαστήριον**, διὰ τῆς πίστεως, ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι (Rom. 3:25)
whom God put forward as an **expiation** by his blood, to be received by faith. (Rom. 3:25) (RSV)
(some English translations have **propitiation** for **ἱλαστήριον** - but that is not correct)

ἵλασμός & ἱλαστήριον

Louw & Nida 40.12 (Biblical Dictionary)

ἵλασμός, οὗ m; **ἱλαστήριον**, ου n: the means by which sins are forgiven — ‘the means of forgiveness, expiation.’

ἵλασμός: αὐτὸς ἵλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ‘(Christ) himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven’ 1Jn 2:2.

ἱλαστήριον: ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον διὰ τῆς πίστεως ‘whom God offered him as **expiation** (as a means by which sins are forgiven) through faith (in him)’ Rom 3:25.

Though some translations render **ἱλαστήριον** as ‘propitiation,’ this involves a wrong interpretation of the term in question.

Propitiation is essentially a process by which one does a favor to a person in order to make him or her favorably disposed, but in the NT God is never the object of propitiation since he is already on the side of people. **ἵλασμός** and **ἱλαστήριον** denote the means of forgiveness and not propitiation.

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL CONCEPT IN WESTERN THEOLOGY OF SALVATION

Atonement (=εξιλέωσις) is the most significant concept with regard to Salvation and Redemption in contemporary American Christian theology and life.

Four major theories of Atonement have been proposed and circulated in Western Christianity in the last 900 years with serious implications on the understanding of personal salvation and the relationship with God.

FIRST WESTERN THEORY OF ATONEMENT

A. The *Ransom or Bargain* theory:

The Fall of Adam and Eve sold humanity to the devil.

Humanity came under the devil's ownership. A debt was owed to the devil and ransom needed to be paid so that the devil can free us.

Solution: God tricks the devil into accepting Jesus' death as a ransom. His sacrifice and death satisfies the claims of the devil for justice. In providing himself as the sacrificial Lamb of God Jesus has freed fallen humanity from the devil's claim over us. (In addition, since hades and death cannot contain Jesus he is raised from the dead.)

This view dominates Western theology before the eleventh century and begins to be modified since then.

SECOND WESTERN THEORY OF ATONEMENT

B. Anselm's theory of debt or satisfaction (*proposed by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury in the eleventh century*)

This is based on the idea of total depravity of man after the Fall: Man's sin (which is absolute depravity) must be punished by God absolutely. God's honor and justice demands that the debt owed to God must be paid off so that justice may be satisfied. The debt is owed to God by the human race (not to the devil), but humanity is in total depravity (fallen and sinful) and cannot pay the debt to God in order to satisfy His justice and free us from punishment. Even if we repent from our sins we cannot be forgiven because the justice of God has to be satisfied. Divine justice and offended honor demand that punishment be exacted. God is unable to forgive until a debt is paid to Him.

Solution: Only Jesus could pay the debt because he is sinless and perfect (***substitutionary atonement***). The Son of God is punished by God the Father in our place so that His wrath and justice might be satisfied. The Son of God saves us from the vengeance of God the Father by taking the punishment himself.

Ramifications: Legalistic approach to salvation - Indulgences developed based on the understanding that God has to be satisfied. Also, the theology of the "Angry God" comes out of this understanding, as well.

THIRD WESTERN THEORY OF ATONEMENT

C. The Penal Substitutionary theory of atonement - developed by the Protestant Reformers

This is a further refinement of Anselm's theory of debt/satisfaction: Where Anselm's theory emphasizes that Christ paid the debt we owe to God, the *penal substitutionary theory* emphasizes that Christ received the punishment that we deserve, ***therefore we no longer need to be punished.***

Ramifications: Here lies the foundation of the popular protestant understanding that once you are saved you are always saved, because Jesus paid the debt for all your sins, so you are not responsible for any of your sins any more. From this, a new idea sprouted called "***the gospel of success***", that if Jesus suffered on our behalf, then if we believe in Him we should not suffer any more in this life or the next and live a prosperous life in every way. This puts the blame of any suffering (or inability to be successful) in this life on the person himself/herself).

Popular Atonement Understanding in Contemporary Western Christianity:

In the popular understanding the prevalent atonement theology is a combination of the above three theories:

ransom / bargain, debt / satisfaction and penal / substitutionary

FOURTH WESTERN THEORY OF ATONEMENT

D. The Moral Exemplar theory of atonement

This theory was first proposed by Peter Abelard in the eleventh century in reaction to Anselm's theory of debt / satisfaction theory and was re-introduced by liberal theologians in the 19th and 20th centuries to counter the legalism of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

In his reaction to Anselm, Peter Abelard pointed out that God does not need the death of His son in order to forgive sins, but can do it quite easily without any sacrifice. The purpose of Christ's life on earth, Abelard claims, is to provide for humanity a *perfect moral model and an example of love* for us to follow. Abelard, thus, deemphasized the significance of Christ's death on the cross and focused on His love and kindness.

Abelard's view of Christ, though true to a degree, neglects the entire Christian understanding of Christ's Incarnation as a transforming process for humanity and the whole creation. He ignores Christ's death and resurrection as transformative events which change human nature and provide a mystical and spiritual re-connection of man to God, and instead reduces everything to a moral paradigm for us.

Ramifications: Modern liberal theologians have used Abelard's ideas to develop what we know as "*the social gospel of softness, kindness and love*" which lacks of the Divine Presence of Christ and His transformative power for humanity.

HOW THE CHURCH ACTUALLY SAW SALVATION & REDEMPTION BEFORE ALL OF THE ABOVE APPEARED

Salvation (σωτηρία) and Redemption (λύτρωσις)

In the use of the church fathers (including the early Christian writers) the two terms are used together and interchangeably, almost as synonyms. Christ is **Λυτρωτής και Σωτήρ ψυχών και σωμάτων** = The Redeemer and Savior of souls and bodies

λύτρωσις has two meanings (delivery, release and redemption εξαγορά using λύτρα- a ransom). Both of these concepts are found in the early Christian fathers. Delivery from the bondage of death. Redemption from our sins.

σωτηρία (Salvation) is derived from the noun **σώος** (verb: **σώζω**) which means "to be safe and sound" or "alive and well". Salvation has a sense of restoration as well as safety. The Incarnation of God (the union of the human with the divine) brings about **healing** to the fallen human nature. **God assumed human nature in order to heal it.**

"What is not assumed cannot be healed" (St. Gregory the Theologian).

ORIGINAL SIN-THE SIN OF ADAM & EVE & ITS CONSEQUENCES

The Sin of Adam and Eve brought about a change in human nature; now human beings have lost their intimate communion with God, their passions have been aggravated and they have become mortal. Our free will (*αὐτεξούσιον*), though, remains intact. We can still choose the good over evil.

The consequences of the fall are not a divine punishment but a usurpation, an illegitimate tyranny exercised by Satan over God's creation. Humans are seen as victims of the universal reign of death (indeed Satan is “a murderer from the beginning”; (Jn. 8:44)). “Through fear of death, they all became subject to lifelong bondage” (Heb. 2:15). **Death is holding humanity in bondage. Salvation is the transcendence of death.**

What is transmitted from parents to children is not sin but mortality and corruption, creating a condition where sin is inevitable: “Having become mortal,” writes Theodore of Cyrus, “[Adam and Eve] conceived mortal children, and mortal beings are necessarily subject to passions and fears, to pleasures and sorrows, to anger and hatred.”

ORTHODOX UNDERSTANDING

**God's saving acts reveal His love for His people
(His *φιλανθρωπία*)**

Christ is both liberator/redeemer (*λυτρωτής*) from death and sin and savior/healer (*σωτήρ*) of our fallen condition. He accomplishes all of this through **His Incarnation, Death and Resurrection: He assumes our fallen humanity, preserves it free of sin, allows it to die on the cross and raises it to a new, renewed, regenerated, transformed and healed, immortal, deified and glorified state.**

He defeats sin by His sinlessness.

He defeats death by His resurrection.

He defeats the devil by freeing us from his grip (as sinners) by offering us the opportunity to be free from sin as we unite to Him who remained sinless.

By so doing, he is both Redeemer (*λυτρωτής*) and Savior (*σωτήρ*).

SCRIPTURAL TEXTS - ST PAUL

"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage." (Heb. 2:15).

St. Paul cries: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24).

"having canceled the bond (χειρόγραφον) which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:14).

"and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12).

SALVATION AS FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE TO THE LAW

For St. Paul the chief enemies of humanity are sin, death and the Law (of Moses). They are linked together holding humankind in bondage.

St. Paul considers the Law as a kind of emergency measure, provided by God to deal with the crisis of human sin (Gal. 3:15-29; cf. Rom. 10:4).

The Law of Moses was meant as a tutor (παιδαγωγός**) to prepare the people for Christ (Gal. 3:23-26; Rom. 2:14-15; Rom. 10:4).**

Instead the Law was treated by the Jewish people as a goal unto itself and thus became a tyrant. People looked to the keeping of the law for their security, and so we may say that even the law of Moses became an idol, not leading to God any more.

The consequence of the unholy alliance between sin and the Law is the rule of death. Death is the product of a life in which relationships have been broken, i.e., the relationship of man to God.

SALVATION AS FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Christ has liberated us from bondage to the Law (Gal. 5:1-12), from sin (Rom. 6:14-23) and from death (I Cor. 15).

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1).

The Gospels vividly represent the triumph of Christ over the destructive forces of evil and death in His threefold temptation (Mt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13), in casting out the impure spirits (Mk. 1:23; 5:1; 7:24; 9:18), in the healing of sicknesses and the raising from the dead, in the miracles over nature, and above all in the crucifixion of Christ; On the Cross an intense combat is waged between God's champion, Life, and its adversary, death. Death is defeated on its own ground. The Resurrection is the ultimate victory of Christ on behalf of humanity.

SALVATION AS LIBERATION FROM BONDAGE TO SIN AND DEATH

For Orthodox Christianity (from the beginning), humanity is not a static, timeless reality. Human beings are understood in terms of relationships, they are in the process of becoming persons as they relate in love with God and the world.

Evil, consequently, is whatever ruptures our communion with God and interrupts the process of attaining the fullness of our humanity.

The Scriptures name three sources and forces of evil “satan”, “sin”, and “death”.

DISCIPLESHIP AS FREEDOM

Discipleship as freedom: "If you continue in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32); "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

The biblical notion of freedom is not for licentious conduct (Gal. 5:13; II Pet. 2:19). It is freedom *from* certain realities, like sin, death, the law, anxiety, hopelessness, a self-centered life, the desire for material things, the desire for prestige and power.

The different images of salvation found in the Scriptures do not necessarily represent different models of salvation but aspects of the same reality which compliment one another as they communicate God's love for the world.

SALVATION AS CLEANSING AND RENEWAL OF HEART AND SPIRIT

Promise of Salvation in Ezekiel

Ezekiel assures the people that God will not only cleanse them but will also put within them **a new heart and a new spirit:**

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh (Ez. 36:25ff.).

Baptism as a rite of purification: "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:11).

WORD FROM THE FATHERS-2ND CENT. THE INCARNATION DESTROYS DEATH AND BRINGS LIFE

St. Irenaeus of Lyon

- **"The Word of God," according to St. Irenaeus, "was made flesh in order that He might destroy death and bring man to life; for we were tied and bound in sin, we were born in sin and live under the dominion of death."**
- **"The same hand of God that formed us in the beginning, and formed us in our mother's womb, in these latter days sought us when we were lost, gaining His lost sheep and laying it on His shoulders and bringing it back with joy to the flock of life."**
- **"Christ redeemed us by His blood; He gave His soul for our soul, His flesh for our flesh; by pouring over us the Holy Spirit He restored union between man and God; He made God to come down to man by the Spirit and made man to come up to God by His incarnation; by His coming He gave us true and permanent immortality, uniting us to Him; these great truths are the refutation of all heresies."**

For St. Irenaeus, Life means, primarily, fellowship with God, the partaking of the life of God, and therefore also a deliverance from sin.

WORD FROM THE FATHERS-4TH CENT. THE INCARNATION BRINGS DEIFICATION

St. Athanasius the Great

- **"the Son of God became man that we might be deified."**
- **Seeing that all men were perishing as a result of Adam's transgression, His flesh was saved and delivered before all the others because it had become the body of the Word Himself, and henceforth we were saved, being of one body with Him in virtue of it.**
- **Christ came "that He might set all free from sin and the curse of sin, and that all might evermore live in truth, free from death, and be clothed in incorruption and immortality."**
- **By partaking of Him [Christ], we partake of the Father; because that the Word is the Father's own. Whence, if He was Himself too from participation, and not from the Father His essential Godhead and Image, He would not deify, being deified Himself.**

WORD FROM THE FATHERS-4TH CENT. THE INCARNATION BRINGS LIFE IMMORTAL

St. Gregory of Nyssa

It is of the nature of fire to tend upwards, and no one finds anything strange when it has thus taken its natural direction. But any who see a tongue of flame shooting downwards would regard it as most surprising if the fire remained fire, and yet in its movement pointed in a direction which was contrary to its nature. Similarly, the invincibility of the Divine power is not so proved by the vastness of the heaven, the radiance of the stars, the orderliness of the universe, and the providential government of all things, as it is proved by its condescension to the weakness of our nature. *The lofty stoops to the lowly without losing its loftiness, the Divine nature unites itself with the human nature, and becomes human without ceasing to be Divine....*

It is the nature of light to drive out darkness and of life to overcome death. Since now we had from the beginning strayed from the right way, and turned away from life to death, what impossibility is there in the mystery that teaches us that *Purity has stooped down to those that were defiled with sin; Life has come to those that were dead, the Guide has come to them that had gone astray so that the defiled might be made clean, so that the dead might be raised, and the wanderers might be led back to the right way?*

Christ conjoined Himself with our nature in order that by its conjunction with the Godhead it might become divine, being exempted from death and rescued from adverse tyranny. *For His triumphal return from death inaugurated the triumphal return of the human race to life immortal.*

WORD FROM THE FATHERS-14TH CENT. CHRIST IS UNITED WITH US IN A PERFECT UNION

Nicholas Cabasilas, a Byzantine theologian of the fourteenth century, said on this subject:

"The Lord allowed men, separated from God by the triple barrier of nature, sin and death, to be fully possessed of Him and to be directly united to Him by the fact He has set aside each barrier in turn: that of nature by His incarnation, of sin by His death, and of death by His resurrection."

Nicholas Cabasilas commenting on St. Paul's words, writes:

"Christ is truly united with us, He permeates us through and through, takes complete possession of us inwardly and surrounds us....Think what it means for Christ's mind to be mingled with ours, our will to be blended with His, our body with His body, and our blood with His....And that this does indeed happen Paul indicates when he states that he has neither mind nor will of his own, but Christ has become all these things for him... God Himself is made one with us in the most perfect of all possible unions."

MODERN THEOLOGIANS

Orthodox theologians view salvation primarily in terms of **communion, sanctification, or deification** (*theosis*) that is based on the **synergy of divine grace and human freedom**. Bishop Maximos Aghiorghousis reflecting upon biblical texts summarizes the prevailing Orthodox view of salvation:

Salvation in Christ is given to humankind through Christ's incarnation, His entire life and work, His suffering, His death, and His resurrection from the dead. Salvation in Christ is freedom from sin, from death, and from the powers of darkness, and healing of our human nature. Ultimately, salvation is the restoration of humanity to communion with God.

MODERN THEOLOGIANS

Vladimir Lossky states that, the divine plan of salvation was not fulfilled by Adam; instead of a straight line of ascent toward God, the will of the first man followed a path contrary to nature, ending in death.

God alone can endow man with the possibility of **deification**, by **liberating** him at one and the same time **from death** and **from captivity to sin**. *What man ought to have attained by raising Himself to God, God achieved by descending to man.*

CONCLUSIONS

God's saving acts reveal His love for His people (His **φιλανθρωπία**)

Christ is both liberator/redeemer (**Λυτρωτής**) from death and sin and savior/healer (**Σωτήρ**) of our fallen condition. He accomplishes all of this through **His Incarnation, Death and Resurrection**: He assumes our fallen humanity, preserves it free of sin, allows it to die on the cross and raises it to a new, renewed, regenerated, transformed and healed, immortal, deified and glorified state.

He defeats sin by His sinlessness.

He defeats death by His resurrection.

He defeats the devil by freeing us from his grip (as sinners) by offering us the opportunity to be free from sin as we unite to Him who remained sinless.

By so doing, he is both Redeemer (**Λυτρωτής**) and Savior (**Σωτήρ**).

Salvation comes to us as we unite ourselves with Christ, both Spiritually in prayer - surrendering to His Love and Mercy - as well as physically in the Holy Eucharist.

Amen!