



SALVATION & REDEMPTION PART I

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:

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

(σωτηρία) Salvation - deliverance from sin and its consequences or from harm, ruin or loss

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

(ἱλαστήριον) = Expiation Biblical: Forgiveness of sins

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)

(ἐξιλέωσις) ? = Expiation

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

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)

ἱλασμός & ἱλαστήριον

Louw & Nida 40.12 (Biblical Dictionary)

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

ἱλασμός: αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστὶν 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. **ἱλασμός** and **ἱλαστήριον** denote the means of forgiveness and not propitiation.

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL CONCEPT IN WESTERN THEOLOGY OF SALVATION

Atonement 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).

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 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** 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*).

to be continued...