

PICTURES OF REDEMPTION

*An examination of the various figures of speech
under which the Atonement is presented in Scripture*

The Principles of the Sacrifice of Christ

First of all, before we consider the "pictures" or "figures" of the sacrifice of Christ, we should outline the basic straightforward principles involved. These will constitute the foundation on which everything else is built:

1. Our need and *helplessness*. Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; Rom. 5:12; Rom. 7:18; James 1:13-15.
2. Jesus Christ was a *man*. Gal. 4:4; Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:14.
3. Jesus Christ was *tempted*. Matt. 4:1-11; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 4:15; 5:8.
4. But he was perfectly *obedient*. John 8:46; Rom. 5:19; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22.
5. Thus he was our perfect *representative*. John 1:29; 1 John 3:16; Rom. 3:25; Matt. 16:24.
6. Christ's death was necessary *for his own salvation*. Heb. 7:27; 9:7,12; 13:20; Phil. 2:8,9.
7. Through Christ we may obtain *forgiveness* of sins. Acts 4:12; 10:43; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:22.
8. Through Christ we become *children* of God. Gal. 3:27-29; Rom. 8:15-17,29-32; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5; 2:11-15.
9. The death of Christ expresses *the love of God*. John 3:16; Rom. 8:31,32; 2 Cor. 5:19.

Truth Versus Error

The positive principles may be summarized and contrasted with some of the popular misconceptions of the "churches", i.e.:

CHRIST DID....

1. Die as our *representative*.
2. Provide a way for our sins to be *forgiven*.
3. Obtain salvation for *himself*.
4. Show the *love* of God.
5. Live and die as our *example*.

CHRIST DID NOT....

1. Die *instead of us*.
2. Pay our "debt".
3. Have a "free life".
4. Appease the *wrath* of God.
5. "Do it all!"

The Words of Salvation

In writing of salvation in Christ, the apostle Paul uses various words. These are words which, through familiarity, we may use interchangeably, not appreciating the shades of meaning and the principles involved. Some examples:

BEFORE GOD, MAN IS....	THE WORK OF SALVATION:
An accused person; a guilty person....	Justification
An estranged person; an enemy....	Reconciliation
A debtor, who <i>cannot</i> pay....	Forgiveness
A slave, serving the wrong "master"....	Redemption
An orphan, with no hope and no inheritance....	Adoption
Common, ordinary....	Sanctification
Unclean, impure....	Purification
In trouble or danger....	Salvation

Our Objective

Christ's sacrifice is the central feature of man's salvation, and indeed of the gospel itself. It is reasonable, then, since God's revelation of Himself in the Bible is so beautifully rich and varied, that Christ's sacrifice be described under *many* figures of speech.

The Cherubim had four faces, because no one face could convey the diversity of the glory of God. The story of Christ's life and work has been given to us in four separate accounts, for the same reason. So it stands to reason that we *need* more than one definition or one picture to explain what God did for us through Christ.

The Scriptures, in fact, present more than a dozen primary "pictures of redemption", and many more minor "pictures". Each separate "picture" has subtleties and shadings, and points of contact with other "pictures". It is good and useful for us to appreciate the truth conveyed by each individual "picture", without at the same time letting figurative language confuse us as to principles. Like the parables, the "pictures of redemption" may mislead and confuse the Bible student if he reasons too closely from the details and loses sight of the "big picture". It is by getting tied too firmly to any one of these figures that one may develop false or limited concepts of the sacrifice of Christ. We can guard against this by looking carefully at a number of the "pictures of redemption", and by determining (in conformity with the basic "Principles") what lessons we should learn from each — while at the same time marvelling at the beauty and diversity of God's revelation of Himself.

Some of the “Pictures of Redemption”

1. The redemption, or ransom, of slaves out of the “slave market”.
2. A shepherd caring for and protecting his flock.
3. A washing, or cleansing — paradoxically, sometimes a washing with blood!
4. A new “birth”, a new “creation”, a new beginning.
5. A potter working with clay to produce a vessel.
6. A sacrifice/victim to seal or guarantee a covenant.
7. The crushing/destruction of a “serpent”.
8. A bond of reconciliation; a union of those who were previously enemies; a joining together in “one body”.
9. The acquittal of an accused (and guilty) criminal.
10. The paying of a debt; the forgiving of an offence.
11. A meal, or feast, of fellowship and joy.
12. Adoption into a family; the love of a father (or mother).
13. A marriage; the love of bride and bridegroom.
14. A “farmer” and his “crop”, the “harvest”.
15. Circumcision; crucifixion: a “cutting off”/repudiation of the “flesh”.
16. The running, and winning, of a race.
17. Victory in a battle or war.
18. The building of a house, or temple, or city.
19. A fisherman drawing in his net.
20. A putting on of a new garment.
21. A moral mandate; a call to action, to repentance and change.
22. The lifting up, or bearing, of another’s burden.
23. Healing of “blind”, “deaf”, “lame”, etc.; resurrection of the “dead”.
24. A tree producing fruit.
25. A spring of water.
26. A rest from labor; the Sabbath day.
27. A “white stone” — i.e., a favorable vote, or approval.
28. Wages received for work done.
29. A hiding place; a refuge; a “rock”; a shelter.

1. "YE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE"

The New Testament contains several words which are translated by "redeem", "redemption", "ransom", and the like:

- (1) **lutron** the price paid for letting loose, or setting free:
Matt. 20:28: The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many.
Mark 10:45: Same as above.
- (2) **lutroo** the verb form: to pay the price:
Luke 24:21: "We trusted that it had been he who should redeem Israel."
Tit. 2:14: Christ might redeem us from all iniquity.
1 Pet. 1:18,19: We were not redeemed with silver and gold from our useless way of life, but we were redeemed with the blood of Christ the "lamb".
- (3) **lutrosis** the act of setting or being set free:
Luke 1:68: The Lord God hath redeemed His people.
2:38: Them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.
*Heb. 9:12: Christ obtained eternal redemption (the words "for us" are italicized in AV; Jesus obtained redemption for himself **and** others).*
- (4) **antilutron** the same as No. 1, with the added preposition "anti" (instead of):
1 Tim. 2:6: Christ gave himself a ransom for all.
- (5) **apolutrosis** the same as No. 3, with the added preposition "apo" (away from):
Luke 21:28: Look up, for your redemption draws nigh.
Rom. 3:24: The redemption that is in Christ.
8:23: The redemption of our body.
1 Cor. 1:30: God has made Christ to be redemption.
Eph. 1:7: Redemption in Christ, through his blood (= forgiveness of sins).
1:14: The redemption of the purchased possession.
4:30: The day of redemption.
Col. 1:14: Similar to Eph. 1:7 above.
Heb. 9:15: Christ's death, the means of redemption from transgressions.
- (6) **agorazo** to be in the "agora", the market-place or forum; hence, to buy or sell there:
1 Cor. 6:20: Ye are bought with a price.
7:23: Same as above.
Rev. 5:9: Christ has redeemed us to God by his blood out of all nations.
14:3,4: The 144,000 redeemed from the earth.
- (7) **exagorazo** the same as No. 6, with the added preposition "ek" (out of):
Gal. 3:13: Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law.
4:5: Christ has redeemed them who were under the Law.
Eph. 5:16: Redeeming the time.
Col. 4:5: Same as above.

The first five words are cognate with one another, while the last two are included to help round out this brief study. In a commercial transaction, as these words all presuppose, there are four parts or parties: the buyer, the seller, the price paid, and the purchase itself. Having all the relevant Scriptures before us at one time, it is easy to identify the four parties or parts of the "transaction" of salvation:

• The Buyer

Christ (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; Tit. 2:14; Heb. 9:12; 1 Tim. 2:6; Gal. 3:13; 4:5) **and God** (Luke 1:68; 1 Cor. 1:30; Rev. 5:9).

• The Seller

"All iniquity" (Tit. 2:14); **"transgressions"** (Heb. 9:15); **"all nations"** (Rev. 5:9); **"the earth" and "men"** (Rev. 14:4); **the curse of the Law** (Gal. 3:13); **the Law itself** (Gal. 4:5).

• The Price Paid

Christ (1 Cor. 1:30); **"himself"** (1 Tim. 2:6; Tit. 2:14); **his life** (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45); **his blood** (1 Pet. 1:18,19; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Rev. 5:9); **his death** (Heb. 9:15). (*From 1 Pet. 1:18 we learn that gold and silver would not be sufficient.*)

• The Purchase Itself

"All" (1 Tim. 2:6), **but at the same time only "many"** (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). **Israel** (Luke 24:21); **"His people"** (Luke 1:68); **"us, the ecclesia, our body"** (Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18; Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Rev. 5:9; 14:3,4; Gal. 3:13; 4:5); **"the purchased possession"** (Eph. 1:14; cp. Tit. 2:14 — *"a peculiar people"*); **and even Christ himself** (Heb. 9:12; cp. 9:7 and 13:20)! *Finally, the purchase itself is equated with the forgiveness of sins* (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).

From the above list and summary several conclusions emerge:

- (a) God and Christ were acting together in the "transaction" of redemption.
- (b) The "all" who are redeemed are in fact not all in the absolute sense.
- (c) The only appropriate purchase price was the life (which included the death) of Christ himself; any other life, being marred by sin, would not have been sufficient.
- (d) The death required was a sacrificial death, requiring bloodshed, on the pattern of the Passover Lamb (1 Pet. 1:18,19).
- (e) Christ gave himself for himself; he was at the same time the buyer, the price paid, and the purchase itself!

This last conclusion leads to other interesting ideas. When a ransom, or price, is paid for the purchase or release of something, no one expects the return of the purchase price as well as the transfer of the item purchased. But this is precisely what happened in the "transaction" of redemption: Christ gave himself as the ransom price, and was at the same time freed by that ransom! The figure of ransom, or redemption, is beautiful and beautifully appropriate in its proper place. But it is absurd when pushed to the extreme as a logical or legal basis for a substitutionary atonement theory.

2. "I LAY DOWN MY LIFE FOR THE SHEEP"

Compare the great "typical" shepherds of the Old Testament:
Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David.....

Genesis 3:21; 4:4	The lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8; 5:6,12). The "sheep" is also the "shepherd" (Psa. 23)!
Exodus 12	The Passover Lamb (John 1:29,36; 1 Cor. 5:7,8).
1 Samuel 17	The shepherd of a small flock becomes the shepherd of a great flock — the nation of Israel (Psa. 78:70-72), slaying Goliath the "lion" and "bear" (vv. 34-37).
Isaiah 53:6,7	The lamb led to the slaughter, silent and submissive (1 Pet. 2:23; Acts 8:32).
Zechariah 13:7	Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered (Matt. 26:31,56).
John 10:1-18	The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.
Hebrews 13:20	The Shepherd, brought from the dead, through the blood of the everlasting covenant (Isa. 63:9,11,12). The angel of His presence (Exod. 33:14), who "shepherded" Israel out of Egypt (Psa. 80:1; Psa. 78:13-16,52-55).

PSALM 23

<p>The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.</p>	<p>FAITH ASSURANCE CONTENTMENT PEACE LIFE DIVINE GUIDANCE CONFIDENCE COURAGE COMPANIONSHIP COMFORT PROVIDENCE FAVOR HAPPINESS BLESSINGS IMMORTALITY</p>
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3. THE DEATH OF THE COVENANT-VICTIM

- Matthew 26:27,28 Blood of the “*new covenant*”.
- Hebrews 13:20 Blood of the “*everlasting covenant*”.
- Exodus 24:8 Blood of the old covenant, to sanctify the people,
and almost all things under the Law (Heb. 9:19-22).
- Galatians 3:17 The Abrahamic covenant, though given first
(430 years earlier), was confirmed last, and
is therefore the new, or everlasting, covenant.
- Genesis 12 through 22 THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT:

Blessing of all families of earth (12:1-3);
Everlasting inheritance of land (13:15-17; 17:8),
involving eternal life,
and thus forgiveness of sins.
The necessity of belief (15:6), and
the ratifying death of the covenant-victim
(15:8-12,17; cp. Jer. 34:18,19);
A new name (17:5);
A special “seed”,
miraculously conceived (18:9-14; 21:1,2),
hated by his “brother” (21:9),
“sacrificed” and then “resurrected”
(ch. 22; Heb. 11:17-19),
so as to possess the gates of his enemies
(22:16-18) and to take a bride
out of the Gentiles (ch. 24)!
- Hebrews 9:15-17 “*For where a covenant is made, there must of
necessity be the death of the covenant-victim.
For a covenant is only in force over a dead body,
because it is not binding as long as the covenant-
victim lives.*”
- 1 Corinthians 11:25 Compare with John 6:33-35,48-58.

4. "AS A BRIDE ADORNED FOR HER HUSBAND"

Genesis 2:20-25	The creation of "Eve", out of the side of "Adam" while he "slept" in a "garden"! "One flesh" — Christ and his bride (Eph. 5:25-32).
Ezekiel 16	God and Israel His "child" and "bride".
Song of Songs 4 and 5	Descriptions of the bride and the bridegroom.
Jeremiah 2:32	"Can a bride forget her attire?" <i>The bridal attire symbolizes our spiritual "garments":</i>

ITEM	SIGNIFICANCE	REFERENCE
Gown of wrought gold	Faith by works (1 Pet. 1:7,9).	Psa. 45:13,14
Gown of needlework	Painstaking labor.	Psa. 45:13,14
Girdle, or sash	Constant readiness and careful walk (Luke 12:35,36; 1 Pet. 1:13).	Isa. 61:10
Ornaments and jewels	Wisdom (Job 28:18,19; Prov. 3:13,15) and modesty (1 Pet. 3:3,4).	Isa. 61:10
Sandals	Preparation (Exod. 12:11; Eph. 6:15), as for a march or military operation (Isa. 5:27).	
Headdress and veil	Humility, modesty, and deference — <i>in the woman</i> (1 Cor. 11).	

Matthew 25:1-13	The parable of the ten virgins.
Revelation 19:7-9; 21:9,10	The marriage of the Lamb.

5. "THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINETH ME"

"His Father Ran and Kissed Him"

- 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 Christ's love leads us to become "new creations",
and to be "reconciled" to him.
- Galatians 2:20 "For *me!*" (Exod. 13:8).
A moral mandate, not a technical law (Phil. 3:8-11).
The infinite power of a holy life,
a life of living sacrifice!
- 1 John 3:11-18; 4:18,19 "Love" is the key, not fear!
- Isaiah 53:4/Matthew 8:16,17 No legalistic "burden-bearer";
no formal, mechanical process!
(Compare 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24.)
- Luke 15:11-32 The lost *sons!*
The preeminent "parable of redemption"!