

JESUS, THE WORLD'S SAVIOR

*"Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." –
Matthew 1:21*

In one short, simple statement, the entire purpose of Jesus' coming to earth is summarized. Salvation has always been at the very heart of Christian dogma. Yet, popular as has been this theme, the philosophy of salvation has been but vaguely understood. Indeed, disagreements regarding this subject have been at the heart of some of the deepest rifts in the Christian church.

The need for salvation is taught in the doctrine of "original sin." Once almost universally taught by Christianity, the concept is not challenged by the theory of evolution and higher critical attacks on the story of the "garden of Eden."

Desiring to believe in his innate goodness and confident of his ability to uplift himself, man has increasingly turned to a theology of self-help. Impatient for God's program of salvation, he has turned to technology for quicker solutions.

The Bible, however, is very specific. Original sin is indeed the culprit. David, the prophet-king, stated the matter succinctly in Psalm 51:5:

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

The Apostle Paul condenses this into a simple formula in Romans 5:19:

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

Being even more specific, Paul puts names to the individuals involved in 1Corinthians 15:22:

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

It is this simple concept of the replacement of one righteous man, Jesus, for the one sinner, Adam, that gives rise to the expression, "substitutionary atonement." This concept is graphically demonstrated by the simple illustration of a balance scale.

THE SCALES OF JUSTICE

{illustrations of three scales showing Adam and God's Law(first two) and Adam and Jesus(third). First and third are level, middle one is tipped with Adam down}

- The perfect requirement of God’s Law was an exact balance for the capabilities of a perfect man.
- Adam’s disobedience in Eden discounted the Law of God and threw the scales of justice out of balance.
- Jesus kept God’s perfect Law, and died for man’s sin, thus one again balancing the scales of justice.

A RANSOM FOR ALL

*“For there in one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus’ Who gave himself **a ransom for all**, to be testified in due time.” – 1 Timothy 2:5, 6*

*“Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life **a ransom for many**.” – Matthew 20:28*

The Greek word translated “ransom” in the New Testament gives further force to this doctrine. It is the word “*antilutron*” in 1 Timothy 2:6 or “*lutron anti*” in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45.

As is apparent to the reader, the word is a compound formed of two words, “*anti*” and “*lutron*.” The latter of these words means simply “to redeem” or “redemption.” It is the former, however, that gives the word its unique flavor. “*Anti*” is a preposition meaning “in place of” or “corresponding.” It retains this same meaning as a prefix or suffix, thus defining “*antilutron*” as a “corresponding” or “substitutionary” redemption.

Regarding the doctrine of salvation, therefore, the term “ransom” is far more specific than it is commonly used today. Now we use the term as an arbitrary sum set for the release of a prisoner or hostage. The use of the Greek “*anti*,” however, takes away the thought of arbitrariness. Instead, it insists on equivalency, or correspondence.

W.E.Vine, in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, has this to say about this word: “The change of preposition in 1 Timothy 2:6 where the word *antilutron*, a substitutionary ransom, is used, is significant. There the preposition is *huper*, on behalf of, indicating that the ransom was provisionally universal.”

Returning to the thought of equivalency, note how the Old Testament law stresses the same principle in Exodus 21:23-25:

“Thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”

It is well in keeping with this guideline that we can extend the rule to “a perfect human life for a perfect human life.” This is the essence of the ransom. Adam, before sin entered, was created perfect. It was in this perfect condition that he committed the original sin. Jesus, to precisely correspond to Adam, needed to be likewise perfect, and thus an exact equivalent.

HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS

As the previous article has shown, it was the death of Jesus as a corresponding price for Adam that will eventually save his people, the human race, from the penalty of their original sin. In addition to the world of mankind which become “his people” by purchase, there are two other groups of humanity that can lay unique claim to this title, **“his people.”** Not only does the term “his people” take on a more specific meaning in this connection, but so also does the term “their sins.”

HIS PEOPLE – THE CHURCH

“And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, Which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”
– Ephesians 1:22, 23

Such intimate terms as “his bride,” “his body” and “the fullness of him” suggest a very special relationship between Jesus Christ and his church. A brief pen picture descriptively depicts this class in Revelation 14:4, 5:

“These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

There are two points worthy of particular notice in this last passage. First, this class is specifically mentioned as being “redeemed from among men.” The word “redeemed” here, in distinction to that used in the first article in this treatise, is not related to the Greek *lutron*, but is the word *agorazo*. This word means “to purchase” in the *agora*, or market place. Here he is not describing the purchase of the entire human race, but of a class redeemed from **“among”** men.

The Apostle Paul discusses this special “purchase” in the book of Romans, calling it “justification”. When a Christian is justified, the blood of Christ is applied on his behalf, thus effectively cleansing him from all prior sin. This is the second point worthy of note in our Revelation text. This class is said to be “without fault before the throne of God.” Notice how this agrees with the words of Paul in Romans 8:1:

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Through justification, Christ saves his people, the church, from the guilt of Adamic sin by offsetting its penalty with his own death. In this vein, Paul writes in Ephesians 5:25-27

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

In this text, Paul writes not only of cleansing the Christian from Adamic sin, but of continual cleansing and washing “of water by the word.” This describes a sanctifying process by which the church is led to increasing holiness in thought, word and deed.

None of these Scriptures imply actual perfection for the Christian. As other men around him, he is prone to human weakness and frequent failures. “A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again” is only too frequently a reality for the Christian, as it is for other men.

What it does mean is that when he fails, he has a peculiar help not available to those who have not come under the blood of Christ. This special assistance is well described in 1 John 2:1:

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

This word “advocate” is well chosen. Like a lawyer, Christ pledges to stand by the Christian’s side and argue his case, pleading his own righteousness for our lack thereof. In a similar vein he is described as a “merciful” high priest:

“Wherefore, in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.” –Hebrews 2:17, 18

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” – Hebrews 4:15, 16

So Jesus specially saves “his people,” the church, from both the guilt of original sin, through justification, and from the failures of continual shortcomings by pleading their case before the bar of divine justice as their “Advocate.”

HIS PEOPLE – ISRAEL

“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” – John 1:11

Jesus was not only born a perfect human being, but, in God’s great plan of salvation, it was necessary that he be born of Jewish stock. The Israelites were, by nationality and heritage, his people.

There were many reasons for this. First, it was essential to fulfill God’s promise to Abraham, given in Genesis 22:18:

“In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”

Commenting on the fact that the word “seed” is in the singular, Paul leaves no doubt as to its meaning:

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed Which is Christ.” – Galatians 3:16

However, there is another reason why Jesus must be born of Jewish stock. The Apostle Paul alludes to this in the same chapter quoted above.

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.” – Galatians 3:13

The law referred to is, obviously, the one given to Israel through Moses at Mt. Sinai. That law, if kept, promised everlasting life and blessings “in basket and store” with which to enjoy that life. On the other hand, if disobeyed, it promised death and the many other attending curses recorded in Deuteronomy chapters 27 and 28.

The law, being perfect, and Israel, being imperfect, it soon became obvious that compliance with the law’s provisions was beyond their ability. Thus Paul could write:

“The commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.” – Romans 7:10

Israel’s situation was somewhat analogous to a criminal apprehended for committing a double murder and being sentenced to concurrent life sentences for his crimes. Should he be found later to innocent of one of the killings, he would still be under sentence for the other.

Thus with Israel—like all mankind they were under a sentence of death through their relationship with Adam.

“In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” – Genesis 2:17

In addition, they were sentenced to death for their failure to keep the law. Even compliance with 99% of its provisions was not sufficient, for James well wrote:

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” – James 2:10

The law’s penalty for sins worthy of death was to hang the victim, after his death, upon a tree for public demonstration. This was called “the curse of the law.” (Deuteronomy 21:23) Thus Jesus did not merely die as an offset for original sin, but the manner of his death, being hung on a “cross” or “tree,” marked him as a malefactor under God’s law.

By the **fact** of his death, Jesus redeemed his people, the world, from original sin. By the **manner** of his death, crucifixion, he redeemed his people, Israel, for their additional “curse of the law.”

ONE MAN FOR ALL

How could one man redeem the sin of an entire nation? In the same way one man, Jesus, could redeem man from 6000 years of sin and death. Since Adam sinned before producing offspring, his children “were born in sin.” Jesus, having the same potential of a race of perfect children in his loins, could thus offset the sin of all.

Redemption from the curse of the law can be similarly understood. The law was not given directly to Israel, but through the hand of a mediator—Moses—who once said:

“Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldst say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which Thou swarest unto their fathers?” – Numbers 11:12

In the New Testament, also, this special relationship is emphasized:

“And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” – 1 Corinthians 10:2

Jesus became the substitute for Moses. In the book of Hebrews his role is pictured as a “better Mediator.” As Moses mediated a covenant between God and Israel, so Christ will mediate a New Covenant “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” (Jeremiah 31:31)

In a very special sense, therefore, Jesus saves his people, Israel, from their sins under the old Law Covenant.

JESUS = EMMANUEL

*“Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.
...Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord
by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a
son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with
us.” – Matthew 1:21-23*

If his name was to be “Emmanuel,” why call attention to the fact that his name was to be “Jesus?”

Emmanuel clearly means “God with us.” We often think of Jesus as meaning “Savior.” Thus, not even the meanings of the names appear to be the same.

This, however, is based on the misconception that Jesus means “Savior.” It is commonly recognized that the Greek “Jesus” is the equivalent of the Hebrew “Joshua.” It is not so commonly recognized that “Joshua” was not the real name of the famous Old Testament character we call by that name.

Joshua’s real name is given in Numbers 13:8 where, in the catalog of the twelve spies of Israel, he is listed as “Oshea the son of Nun.” The change of his name is chronicled in verse 16 of the same chapter: *“And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun Jehoshua.”*

The Hebrew *Oshea*, or *Hosea*, does mean “Savior.” All Moses did was add the prefix *Je* to the name. In all Hebrew names the prefix *Je* stands for *Jehovah*.

Joshua, or Jehoshua, or Jesus in the Greek, therefore, means more than merely “Savior.” The name means “Jehovah saves.” Therefore it is equivalent in meaning to Emmanuel, “God with us.”

In the Old Testament prophecy we find out that God does not plan to abandon his people, but to be “with them” as a “Savior.”

In the direct sense, Jesus is the Savior, because he was the one who died on the cross. In the ultimate sense, God is the Savior because it is His plan of salvation and it was through the sacrifice of his own son that such salvation could come about.