



THE WORK OF CHRIST

LESSON 9

RELATED IDEAS OF THE ATONEMENT (continued)

b) Substitution

Throughout the New Testament there are certain passages which reflect the substitutionary idea: "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). There are many other passages where the same concept is expressed: (1 Corinthians 11:24; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15; Galatians 1:4, 2:20; Ephesians 5:2, 25; 1 Peter 2:21, 3:18; 1 John 3:16). Interesting prepositions are used in all these verses. These are, in the Greek, ANTI and HUPER.

The prepositions may be tabled as follows:

ANTI means	"in place of"	HUPER means	"for"
	"instead of"		"on behalf of"
	"in exchange for"		"for the sake of"
	"as a substitute for"		

The concept of substitution is concerned with the New Testament statement that the sinless one died for the sinner, that on the cross Christ did for man that which man could not do for himself. In the cross event, God acted supremely and finally for man's salvation. Death, the aspect of it that is the result of sin within man, is defeated, (Hebrews 2:14, 15). He tasted death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9). Death could no longer be considered the end of life, for obedience and faith had overcome death with the newness of life. Penal suffering is the product of guilt and hopelessness and is on the human level, while redemptive suffering (a voluntary act on behalf of others, out of love for the guilty) is God's kind of suffering.

This act of substitution may be interpreted as:

- 1 An act of obedience. Paul (in Romans 5:18) contrasts the "one man's trespass" of Adam with the "one act of righteousness" of Christ. Obedience also is seen to be a distinctive characteristic of Christ's work in the statement of Hebrews 5:8 that "He learned obedience through what He suffered."
- 2 It is an act of submission to the judgement of God, a voluntary endurance of the consequences of human sin. 1 Peter 2:24b tells us that Christ "bore our sins in His own body on the tree"; while Hebrews 9:29 says "Christ having been offered once to bear the sins of many."

Christ's ministry for men was one of obedience to the Father's will and of self-identification with sinners.

He fulfils this obedience and endures this suffering not as an individual within the human race, but as the Incarnate Son of God.



c) **Reconciliation**

When, by repentance and faith, a man appropriates what Christ has done for him on the cross, he is reconciled to God. This salvation event has brought such a radical change to man in all of his relationships that a new term was necessary to convey fully its meaning. This term, reconciliation, is not found in the Old Testament, and is used only by Paul in the New Testament. It occurs in five passages: Romans 5:10-11, 11:15; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Col. 1:20-22; Eph. 2:16.

Reconciliation achieves restoration of fellowship between persons between whom enmity has existed. Through Christ, reconciliation is a glorious possibility.

God makes reconciliation a live option, but man can refuse the option. There can be no doubt of Paul's belief that only God could perform reconciliation, and that man was the object of reconciliation. The word "enemies" appears in one of Paul's statements: "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son-" Rom. 5:10. Man is the enemy of God, because of sin. God, in grace, extends forgiveness to man. When man accepts, he is reconciled to God.

The work of reconciliation, in the sense of the New Testament, is a work which is finished, and which we must conceive to be finished, before the Gospel is preached. God has wrought in Christ a work of reconciliation which is available for the whole world. Reconciliation is not something which is doing; it is something which is done.

The Atonement set forth in special terms

1. **REDEEMER, REDEEM, REDEMPTION**

Redemption is inseparable from a redeemer whose purpose it is to redeem. The Redeemer theme is an Old Testament one, and the metaphor means loosing from a bond, setting free from captivity or slavery, buying back something lost or sold.

God's act of deliverance was that of the redemption of Israel from Egyptian bondage (Deut. 7:8; Isaiah 51:11, 52:3f, 12). The concept of redemption became a prominent metaphor of God's deliverance of his people, having primary reference to the historical deliverance of Israel from the power of Egypt at the Red Sea. This act of God did not imply a payment for in the act of deliverance no transaction was involved except that of obedience. The prophet expressed the basic meaning when he said of Israel, "You shall be redeemed without money", (Isaiah 52:3), and we may put alongside this 1 Peter 1:18f, "It is through the death of Christ that we have redemption". In Him we have redemption through his blood (Eph. 1:7). Hence, redemption is God's gracious act for man who, because of sin, could not attain nor secure freedom for himself.

Redemption also looks to the future. This includes final deliverance from sin and death. Paul wrote to the Ephesians "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption", (4:30). Redemption is the act of God in the past, continued into the present, and it will come into its fullest realisation in the future.



2. RANSOM

Ransom is closely related to Redemption, but it deserves special consideration because of the setting in which Jesus used the term. Among the disciples, tension arose as to their places in the coming Kingdom. Jesus, being aware of the contention and self seeking for pre-eminence, made clear the basis of greatness in his Kingdom. He said, "For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many", (Mark 10:45). The meaning is that there would be the voluntary giving of one's total being even unto death for a specific purpose. This is in accord with another statement made by Jesus "and I lay down my life for the sheep", (John 10:15f).

The word ransom (LUTRON) was used in three ways by Greek writers

1. As a money price paid to secure the release of one who is in captivity or bondage.
2. As *anything by* which one may avert the vengeance of the gods for a crime committed.
3. As a recompense or requital.

The Greek Translator of the Old Testament (Septuagint) in common use in Jesus' day translated the word LUTRON as release effected in any way whatsoever. It seems likely that the inspiration for it came from Jesus' acceptance of the role of the suffering servant (Isaiah 53) as applying to his ministry, self-giving and death for others. The giving of his life for others made it possible to free them from sin and restore them to God. There are other passages which refer to the costliness of our redemption e.g. Gal. 1:4; 2:20; Eph. 5:2, 25; Col. 1:14; Titus 2:14.

In 1 Peter 1:18, 19 we read "You were ransomed ... not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." The metaphor here involves a denial that Christ's death is to be likened to the payment of a sum of money, however large. Man's redemption could not be achieved by any material sacrifices, however costly. It could be achieved only by Christ's personal offering of himself as a sacrifice, on behalf of mankind.

3. THE LAMB OF GOD

Closely allied to the atonement is the title, "Lamb of God". In the Old Testament the figure of a lamb is used to symbolise many things e.g. guilelessness (Jer. 11:9); uncomplaining suffering (Isa. 43:7); the burnt offering given as a present to God (Gen.22:8); the memorial of the deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 12:3-14) and as a sacrifice of expiation, to which there are many references in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. Lambs were offered daily in the temple at the morning and evening sacrifice. Christ would be at one and the same time the lamb of the passover and the expiatory sacrifice. This we see, for example, in 1 Peter 1:18, 19 - "You were ransomed ... with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot".



Question 1:

Why did Jesus have to become our substitute to make us right with God? Why was he willing to do this?

Question 2:

What does "reconciliation" mean? Why is reconciliation between God and man needed? How is it possible?

Question 3:

How was God the Israelites' "Redeemer" in Deut. 6:21-23; 7:6, 8?

Question 4:

In our present day a ransom can be a lot of money. How costly was the ransom Jesus paid for us? What are the benefits for us? (Gal.1:4, 2:20; Eph. 5:2, 25; 1 Peter 1:18, 19 etc)

Question 5:

What do you think John the Baptist meant when he called Jesus "Lamb of God" in John 1:29?

QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY:

"Redemption is the act of God in the past, continued into the present, and comes into its fullest realisation in the future". What does this mean? How has God redeemed you in the present?