

 APRIL 18, 2012

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# The Ransom Theory

Mark 10:35–45  

## MARK 10:35–45

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (v. 45).

The penal substitution view of the atonement accounts for two basic truths about the death of our Savior. First, Jesus’ death was the means by which the demands of God’s justice were satisfied. He gave Himself on the cross as a propitiation — to accept the full force of divine wrath against sin and turn it away from His people. Second, Jesus’ death accomplished this goal because our Lord was a vicarious substitute. He suffered in our place so that God could declare us righteous without violating His own standards (Rom. 3:21–26; Heb. 9:1–10:18).

Both of these truths indicate clearly that the atonement was not a simple event but one with multifaceted significance. Even though the New Testament emphasizes the penal substitution view of the atonement, it does have other perspectives on what happened at the cross. For example, Colossians 2:15 and Hebrews 2:14 depict the cross as

Jesus' triumph over Satan. Through His death, Christ destroyed the power of the Devil.

For centuries, the relation of Jesus' atonement to the kingdom of Satan has been studied and debated. In the early church, some taught that on the cross Jesus paid a ransom to the Evil One. His death was seen as the price for our release from the dominion and bondage of Satan and his minions.

Certain problems with this view should be immediately apparent. Scripture never describes us as owing Satan anything. Also, to view the Son of God paying anything to the Devil gives him far more credit and power than he actually deserves. Most important, Matthew 6:12 tells us to ask the Lord to forgive us our debts. If we accept the ransom-to-Satan view, we neglect that we are debtors to God.

All impenitent sinners are in bondage to sin and Satan. Yet this bondage is the result of God's sovereign permission and does not originate from the power of Satan. This enslavement is a consequence of the debt sinners have incurred against God.

Today's passage informs us that the atonement was a ransom (Mark 10:45), and Christ paid this ransom to His Father. Jesus did not secure our release from the Evil One through paying a price to Satan but by crushing the Devil's head and doing what was necessary for God to consider our debts paid in full.

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## Coram Deo

When we enter this world in Adam, we owe God a great debt for breaking His law. We can by no means ever pay

this debt, and it is futile even to try to appease our Father by our good works. But Christ has paid this debt for all who love Him, and He has set us free from the dominion of Satan and his minions. Nothing more needs to be done, and we can rest knowing that we are at peace with God and no longer in debt to Him for violating His law.

## For Further Study

GENESIS 3:14–15

PSALM 89:1–28

COLOSSIANS 2:13–14

1 JOHN 3:8

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Vicarious Substitution

Matthew 3:13–17

Our Kinsman Redeemer

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Leviticus 25:23–28

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Atonement as Ransom

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