

Liberation Redemption... Subjective Aspect of Atonement – Part 2

Throughout the New Testament, there are various images that are used to describe the importance of Christ's work of atonement such as penal substitution (see the article: "Substitution... the basis of atonement"), or expiation and propitiation (see the article: "A Word Study of the Greek Terms Hilastērion and Hilasmos - Expiation verses Propitiation"). Redemption, defined as "the act of freeing or liberating", is also associated with Christ's work of atonement.

Lost in the English translation is whether redemption is subjective, which is in reference to His relationship with human beings or objective, which is in reference to God's legal and judicial perspective.

Eight Greek terms are associated with two English terms "redemption" or "redeem", three of which are used to describe the subjective aspects of atonement. Understanding these subtleties provide a richer understanding of atonement and a clearer theology.

Apolutrōsis (Strong's #629)

Definition: This feminine noun describes the releasing effect by payment of a ransom. It is used within the context of a redemption for or deliverance from something or a liberation procured by payment of a ransom.

Found seven times in the epistles of Paul, "apolutrōsis" is used to indicate the deliverance from sin and its penalty brought about by the propitiary death of Christ. It is interesting to note that Luke 21:28 and Romans 8:23 "apolutrōsis" is used with a perspective towards the future.

Luke 21:28

"But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption (**apolutrōsis**) is drawing near."

Romans 3:24

being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption (**apolutrōsis**) which is in Christ Jesus;

Romans 8:23

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption (**apolutrōsis**) of our body.

1 Corinthians 1:30

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption (**apolutrōsis**),

Ephesians 1:7

In Him we have redemption (**apolutrōsis**) through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

Ephesians 1:14

who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption (**apolutrōsis**) of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 4:30

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (**apolutrōsis**).

Colossians 1:14

in whom we have redemption (**apolutrōsis**), the forgiveness of sins.

Liberation Redemption... Subjective Aspect of Atonement – Part 2 (page2)

The writer of Hebrews (disputedly by Paul) uses *apolutrōsis*” in the same manner to indicate the deliverance from sin and its penalty.

Hebrews 9:15

For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption (**apolutrōsis**) of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 11:35

Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release (**apolutrōsis**), so that they might obtain a better resurrection;

Lutrōtēs (Strong's #3086)

Definition: This masculine noun is used for “redeemer”, or “deliverer” of liberation.

Used only once by Stephen in his speech to Jewish leaders, the term “lutrōtēs” was in reference to Moses who did not pay any ransom price to liberate Israel from Egypt.

Acts 7:35

"This Moses whom they disowned, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND A JUDGE?' is the one whom God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer (**lutrōtēs**) with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush.

Exagorazō (Strong's #1805)

Definition: This Greek verb is used in the New Testament in two different senses:

1) redeem in the sense of payment of a price to recover something from the power of another or as a metaphor describing the deliverance by Christ of Christian Jews from the Law and its curse.

Galatians 3:13

Christ redeemed (**exagorazō**) us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"—

Galatians 4:5

so that He might redeem (**exagorazō**) those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

2) redeem with a view towards time and in the context of “buying up intensively” or making the most of every opportunity to escape from the consequences of breaking God’s Law.

Ephesians 5:16

making (**exagorazō**) the most of your time, because the days are evil.

Colossians 4:5

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making (**exagorazō**) the most of the opportunity.

Liberation Redemption... Subjective Aspect of Atonement – Part 2 (page3)

Because these three Greek terms “apolutrōsis”, “lutrōtēs” and “exagorazō” refer to the release or emancipation of a prisoner, they represent the terms that describe the subjective aspects of redemption.

In each use of these terms, they have been used in a limited exclusive sense namely to Christians or to the nation of Israel.

This distinction is important to understand, because it provides the basis of understanding the objective and subjective aspects of redemption.

Objectively, from God’s judicial and legal perspective, Jesus Christ’s ransom price was sufficient for all mankind and provisionally available to all.

Subjectively, from God’s perspective of His relationship to human beings, the liberation from the consequences of sin is only effectual for those who believe.

The two other words that make up the eight Greek words associated with the English terms “redemption” or “redeem” are the verb “lutroein” and the abstract noun “lutrōsis.” In contrast to the previous six Greek terms, these two are used to refer to both the objective and subjective sense of redeem / redemption.

“Lutroein” is a Greek verb from which four nouns share a common root: lutron, antilutron, apolutrōsis, and lutrōtēs. It is used in an objective sense in 1 Peter 1:18 and subjective sense in Luke 24:21 and Titus 2:14.

“Lutrōsis” is seen in the subjective sense in Luke 1:68; 2:38 and Hebrews 9:12. It has been used in the objective sense in extrabiblical sources such as the Didache, which is understood to be a first century church document known as the “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” and possibly what the apostles taught the Gentiles.

Understanding the six Greek terms that are associated with different senses of redemption:

Objective Sense (from God’s judicial and legal perspective)	Subjective Sense (from God’s perspective of His relationship to man)
Lutron (noun): the price of redemption	Apolutrōsis (noun): the releasing effect by payment of ransom (i.e. deliverance from sin)
Antilutron (noun): the price in exchange for another	Lutrōtēs (noun): redeemer, deliverer
Agorazō (verb): the action of buying / purchasing	Exagorazō (verb): the action of buying with the intent of recovering something or with to make the most of every opportunity

Liberation Redemption... Subjective Aspect of Atonement – Part 2 (page4)

Understanding the Greek words that form the basis of the English translations of redemption and redeem provide a clear picture that the offer of salvation is universal (Acts 17:30; Matt 28:18-20). Simply stated, God invites all men, because Christ provided for all.

Jesus Christ did die for you regardless of who you are and if you exercise repentant faith, you will be saved.

References:

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