



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 128

**Ransom theory** – One of the ways in which the atonement of Christ has been described is known as the ransom theory. A ransom refers to the required payment to rescue or redeem someone from captivity or some other terrible state. In Mark 10:45 Jesus said that He came to sacrifice His life as the payment for the redemption of sinful man (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 5:9).

This is a valid and biblical way of describing the atonement of Christ; however in church history a few have taught that Christ paid this ransom to Satan. Some may have come to this conclusion from passages where unbelievers are said to be under the power of the devil (1 Corinthians 10:19-20; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Galatians 4:8; Ephesians 2:2; 2 Timothy 2:26). Elsewhere we read of some people being possessed by demons (Matthew 8:28; 12:22; 15:22; 17:18). Though this is the true state of all unbelievers, it would be a category mistake to suggest that with His death on the cross Christ paid Satan the price needed to save sinners. The Bible clearly teaches that the devil is a fallen creature, the arch-rebel and violator, the enemy of God, cast down from heaven, being himself under the wrath of God. He has no right or authority to demand anything from Christ for our salvation, nor does he desire man's salvation.

Whereas God, the holy Creator and Judge of all, who has been offended by sinful man, He is the one who set the death sentence against sin, and has every right and authority to demand a payment for the redemption of sinners, but who also graciously decreed and sent His Son to do just that, thus satisfying His justice. Scripture teaches that sinful man is in debt to holy God and not Satan (Matthew 6:12).

Far from paying a ransom to the devil by His death, the Bible represents Jesus as victorious over Satan, sin and death, crushing them and their power, and freeing His people from their bondage. This is known as the Christus Victor aspect of the death of Christ (Colossians 2:13-15; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8). So these and other aspects of the death of Christ, when correctly understood, present a rich picture of what Christ did, and are effectively brought together by the penal substitutionary view of the atonement.

**Blood of Christ** – Blood is a central theme of the Bible and Christianity. In Leviticus 17:11 God said, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." The entire sacrificial system instituted by God in the Old Testament was integral to man's relationship with Him, whereby sinners were to approach God through animal sacrifices, having their sins forgiven through the blood of a substitute.

Though the repeated animal sacrifices did cleanse people from their sins, these were temporary in nature and not based on the blood of the animals, but rather they served as signs pointing to the true and eternal sacrifice to come, the promised Messiah, foreshadowing the atoning blood of Jesus for salvation. The people were saved and their sins pardoned when they believed and trusted in the promised Messiah (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:1-3). The same principle is restated in the New Testament in Hebrews 9:22.

We have heard many sermons and sang many songs about the blood of Jesus Christ, having power to wash away our sins, to cleanse us, and to make us whole. These are true statements if expounded properly, but these are often taken out of their biblical context, conveying the idea that Jesus' blood has some magical qualities. But as seen in the doctrines of Christology, at His incarnation Jesus assumed a human nature, with a human body just like our bodies. Though the Bible is clear that in all this He was without sin, His body was not divine or supernatural, and His blood was normal human blood.

When the Bible talks about blood, it is referring to life (Leviticus 17:14). And when we read of us being freed from our sins and redeemed by the blood of Christ (Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; Revelation 1:5), it is not referring to some magical power in the blood of Christ, but to His death for us (John 6:53-58).