

The word “Ransom” Part 2

Analysis of the Greek word λυω and its progression in the New Testament

λυω is used in the New Testament very much like it is used in the Septuagint (LXX) Old Testament. It is used as a verb meaning “to loosen.” There are abundant examples, including:

Matthew 5:19; 16:19; 18:18; 21:2. Mark 1:7; 7:35; 11:2, 4, 5, etc.

Luke 3:16; 13:15; 19:30; 19:31, 32. John 1:27; 2:19; 5:18, 7:23, etc.

λυω carries the same meaning as it does in the LXX, but is also used for “divorce” (to loosen or put away), “to destroy,” “to break down,” and occasionally for “setting free – emancipating a person in bonds.”

λύτρωσις – *lutrōsis*, noun

This word occurs three times in the New Testament:

1) **Luke 1:68** (Zacharias’ prophetic announcement)
“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and **redeemed** his people.”

2) **Luke 2:38** (The prophetess Anna has declared)
“...And spake of him to all them that looked for **redemption** in Jerusalem.”

In these two references, the noun use is clearly in the sense of “national deliverance,” with no ransom concept attached.

3) **Hebrews 9:12**

This is a clear picture of Jesus Christ our High Priest in the setting of what was the pattern of the Old Testament. Note that Hebrews 9:7 is referencing the Day of Atonement (again, a national concept) during which the priest “offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.” Here in Hebrews 9:12, we see “but by his own blood he entered in once,” not with the blood of animals, having obtained eternal **redemption** for us. Here, a sacrifice / payment, not by offering the blood of goats and calves, but his own blood.

λυτρωτής – *lutrōtēs*, noun

The noun λυτρωτής occurs only one time in the New Testament, in Acts 7:35: “This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a **deliverer** by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.” This is part of Stephen’s sermon in which he contrasts and compares Jesus and Moses: Moses was a picture of a greater Deliverer, Jesus. (cf. Peter’s declaration in Acts 5:31.)

ἀπολύτρωσις – *apolutrōsis*

This compound is made up of the prefix ἀπο (*apo*) + *lutrōsis*. *apo*= “away from” or “out of,” etc. Translated 9 times as “redemption” and 1 time as “deliverance.” In 3 out of 10 times, there appears to be an eschatological emphasis.

1) **Luke 21:28**: “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your **redemption** draweth nigh.”
(ἀπολύτρωσις)

2) **Romans 8:23**: “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the **redemption** of our body.”

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3) **Ephesians 4:30:** “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of **redemption.**”

Other examples with different applications:

Ephesians 1:7, 14; Colossians 1:14; Romans 3:24; 1 Corinthians 1:30, Hebrews 9:15 and 11:35.

ἀπολύω – apoloō

This is used at least 15 times in the New Testament with a few different meanings, e.g. in Matthew 1:18–19, where Joseph found Mary with child and sought to put her away privily. Also used as the root for the word meaning “release” (as in forgiveness) in Luke 6:37.

ἀντίλυτρον – antilytron, noun

This word occurs only once in the New Testament, in 1 Timothy 2:6 as the English word “ransom.” In the context of the passage, the Apostle Paul urges Timothy to pray (give thanks, etc.) for all mankind, for kings and men in authority to live quiet and peaceable lives in godliness and honesty. This type of petition is good and acceptable in God’s eyes, who desires all mankind to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth that there is one God, and one intermediary between God and men—Jesus Christ, “who gave himself a ransom for all.” (KJV) (Note that the NEB translates this as “who sacrificed himself to win freedom for all mankind.”)

What should be pointed out is that although 1 Timothy 2:6 is similar to Mark 10:45, the distinction should be obvious: 1 Timothy 2:6 “For all” vs. Mark 10:45 “for many.”

The Greek is not ambiguous; therefore the meaning is determined by the context and its proper application.

Mark 10:45 is the culmination of the response to James’ and John’s request to have a special place in the kingdom. A pattern has been established in Mark’s Gospel that will illuminate the fullest possible meaning of the words “a ransom for many.” This pattern is seen in Mark 8:31–9:1, Mark 9:31–9:37 and Mark 10:32–10:45. (See following page.)

Pattern #1 = Jesus telling His disciples of His death *and* resurrection

Pattern #2 = Disciples don’t understand

Pattern #3 = Mindset of position in God’s economy vs. man’s idea, that is, who will be the greatest, the request for a special place in glory, etc.

Pattern #4 = The paradox of servitude in Jesus’/God’s economy.

When these patterns are examined they reveal the ultimate meaning of Mark 10:45. When we serve God, we are not serving according to the service/servitude of the world (or its views). We, who serve and worship God, take no thought of how we can get position or establish greatness. Just like the Apostle Paul who opens many of his letters with “Paul, servant (δουλος) of Jesus Christ....” whom in his servant/slave role became great because of Christ and in his servitude to God became free. Jesus’ “life for many” (ransom, *lytron*) is the means/place of freedom.

Pattern #1: Jesus teaching about His death *and* resurrection. (See numbered declarations in the text below.)

Pattern #2: Disciples do not understand.

Pattern #3: Mindset of position in God's economy vs. man's view (regarding the greatest position.)

Mark 8:31-9:1

The disciples do not understand

31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

34 ¶ And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

ψυχήν

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

ψυχήν

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

ψυχῆς

38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

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AND he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

Mark 9:31-9:37

31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

33 ¶ And he came to Că-pě'r-nă-ŭm: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.

35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all.

πρωτος

36 And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

Mark 10:32-10:45

32 ¶ And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

33 Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:

34 And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

35 ¶ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:

40 But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.

41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

* 42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

ψυχήν

Pattern #4: Paradox of serving God.

First shall be last, last shall be first.

He that saves his life shall lose it, he that loses his life shall save it.

The Gentiles (*ethnos*) lord it over people, but among you, you must be a servant/slave (*diakonos/doulos*.)

* Translation of VV42-45:

42 "...You know that among the Gentiles (ἐθνῶν) those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them.

43 But it is not so among you; but whosoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant (διάκονος)

44 And whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave (δοῦλος) of all

45 For the Son of man came not to be served (διακονηθῆναι) but to serve (διακονῆσαι) and to give the life (ψυχήν) of him as a LUTRON (the means or place of loosening or being freed, as in emancipation) of many." In this context, *not all* but *many*. i.e. disciples who are servants/slaves.