



Heart of It All, No. 5: God's Plan of Salvation, Part 1

The core teaching of the New Testament can be found in one of the most beautiful verses of Scripture:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16 NKJ

God's plan of salvation, which was decided upon before the creation of the world, is rooted in God's love for humankind. God's motivation is love.

God knew, before creating the universe, that human beings created with free will would sin, so He made a way to save everyone from the penalty for sin through His plan of salvation. His plan for the salvation of humankind enabled Him to be true to all aspects of His divine nature: His holiness, righteousness, and justice, and His love, mercy, and grace.



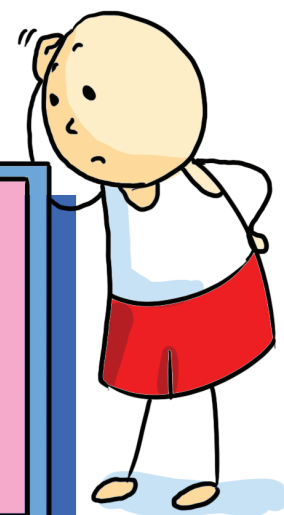


A question that is often asked is: Why did Jesus have to die on the cross? What did His death do that brought us forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God?

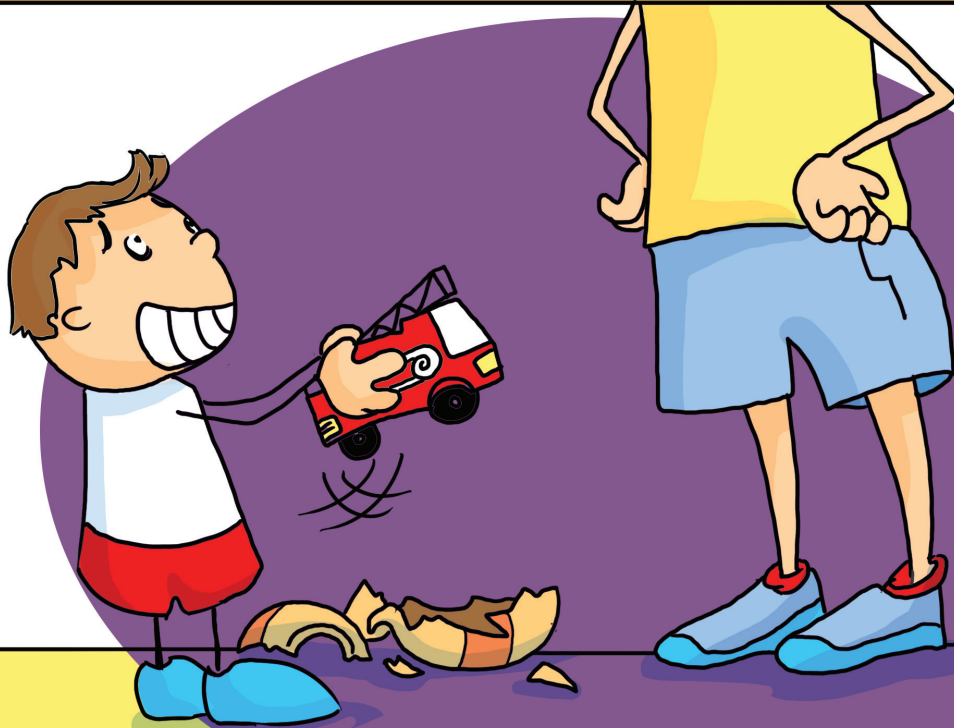
A combination of four scripture-based concepts look at the same picture from different angles and gives us an understanding of how Jesus' death saves us from the punishment of our sins and reconciles¹ us to God.

¹ The dictionary defines "reconcile" as "to restore to friendship, compatibility, or harmony"

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| Propitiation | Redemption |
| Substitution/ Vicarious Sacrifice | Reconciliation |



1. Propitiation



Authors Lewis and Demarest explain it this way:

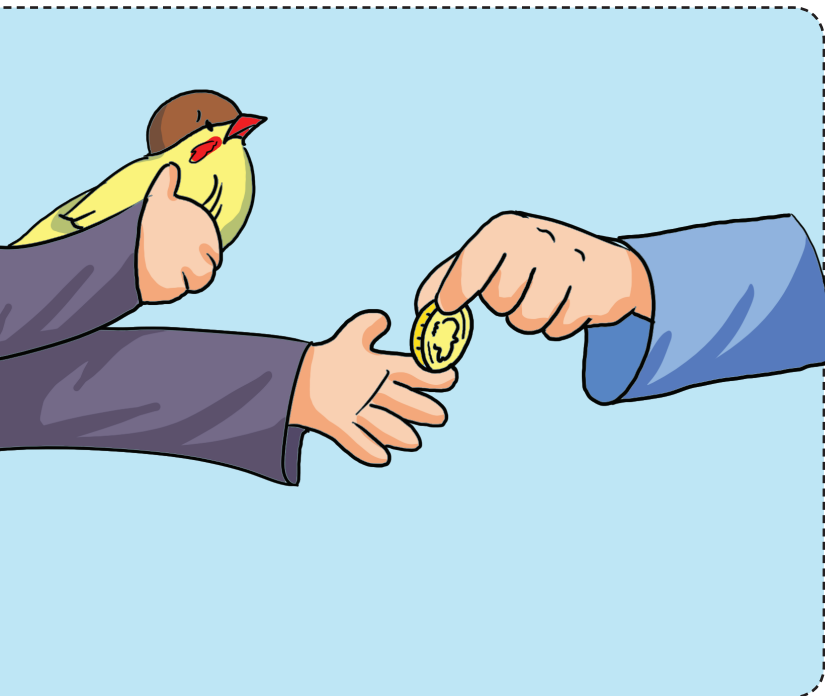
The Judge of the world, whose moral law is constantly violated, found us guilty and pronounced the just sentence of death. Then, leaving heaven, the Son became a man, lived without sin, and paid in full the [immeasurable] penalty for our sins. The Judge who found us guilty came in the person of His own Son to atone for our sins.

The first concept is propitiation, which means “an offering that turns away wrath.” This concept has to do with the wrath of God. Due to His holiness and righteousness, God must judge and punish sin. However, the sacrificial offering of Jesus’ death, like the sacrifices made in the Old Testament, appeases God’s wrath. In His love for us, God made a way to pardon our sin, while remaining true to His nature. (See 1 John 2:2 and Romans 3:25.)

2. Redemption

Another biblical concept that helps to explain how Jesus' death has brought us salvation is redemption. The words translated to redeem and redemption come from the Greek family of words lutron and lutroo, which means to loose, to set free through a ransom payment.

Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. Matthew 20:28 ESV



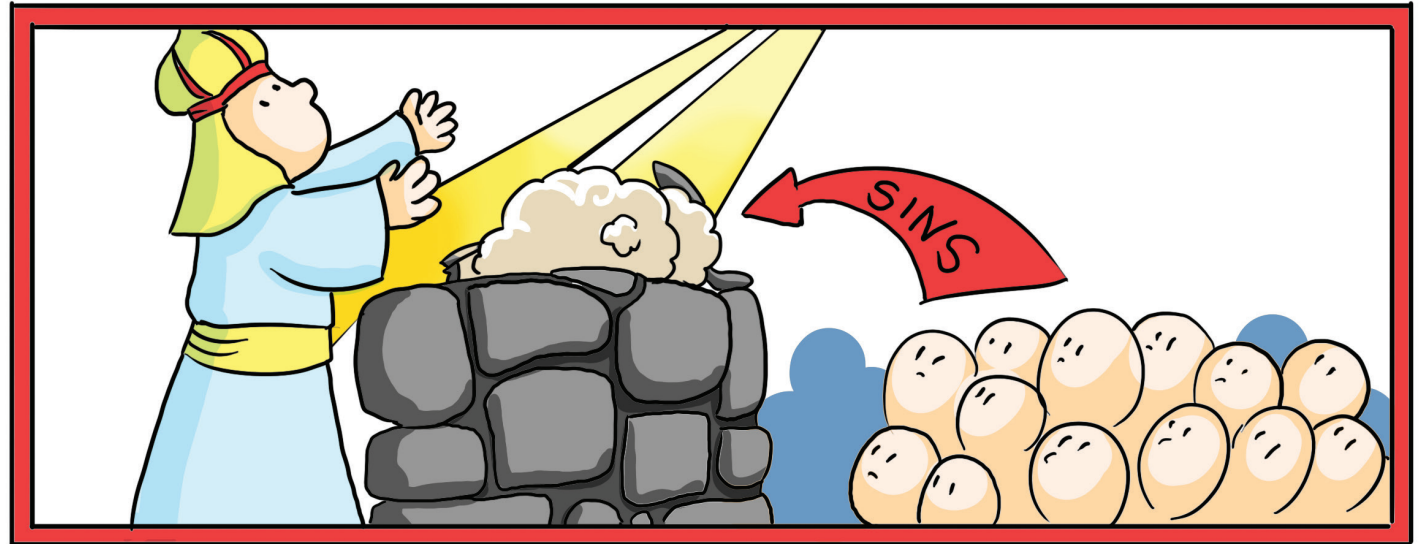
Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works. Titus 2:14 ESV

There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 1 Timothy 2:5–6 ESV

The use of the words ransom or redeem in these verses expresses paying a price. The ransom is paid to God the Father, since He is the one who has put the penalty in place. Jesus, God's Son, pays the ransom by way of His death.

3. Substitution/Vicarious Sacrifice

A third concept which can provide further understanding of salvation is substitutionary sacrifice or vicarious sacrifice. In this case, “substitute” and “vicarious” means to stand in place of another or represent another—which is what Jesus did for us through His death on the cross.



He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:5 ESV.

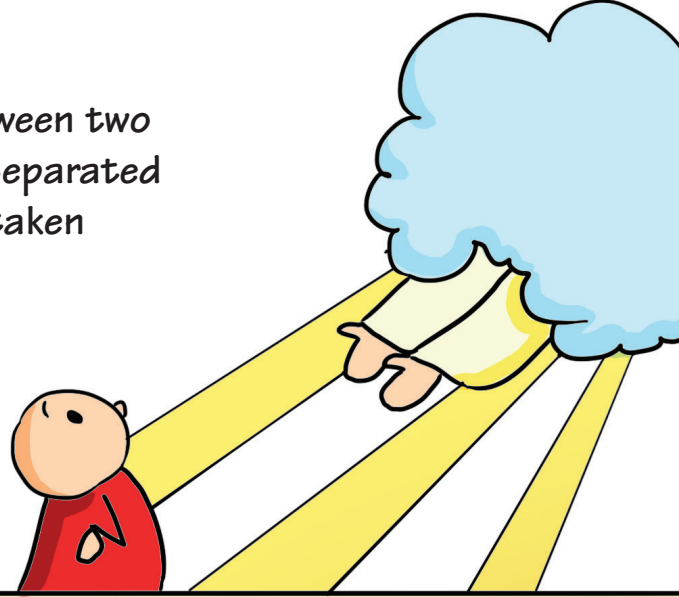
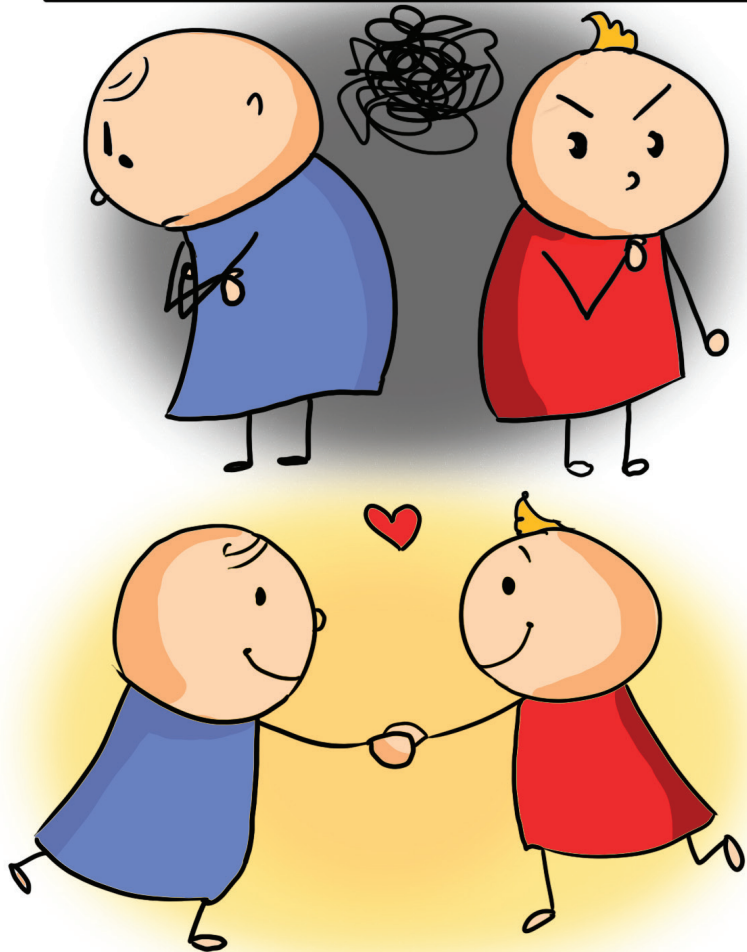
All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6 ESV.

Jesus stated that He gave His life as a ransom for many. The word “for” in this verse is translated from the Greek word *anti*, meaning instead of or in place of. See the following verse:

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 ESV.

The fourth concept, reconciliation, generally refers to the ending of hostility between two persons who have quarreled. It signifies bringing back together those who were separated or enemies. Sin brings separation of humanity from God, but Jesus' death has taken away the separation and has thus changed our relationship with God.

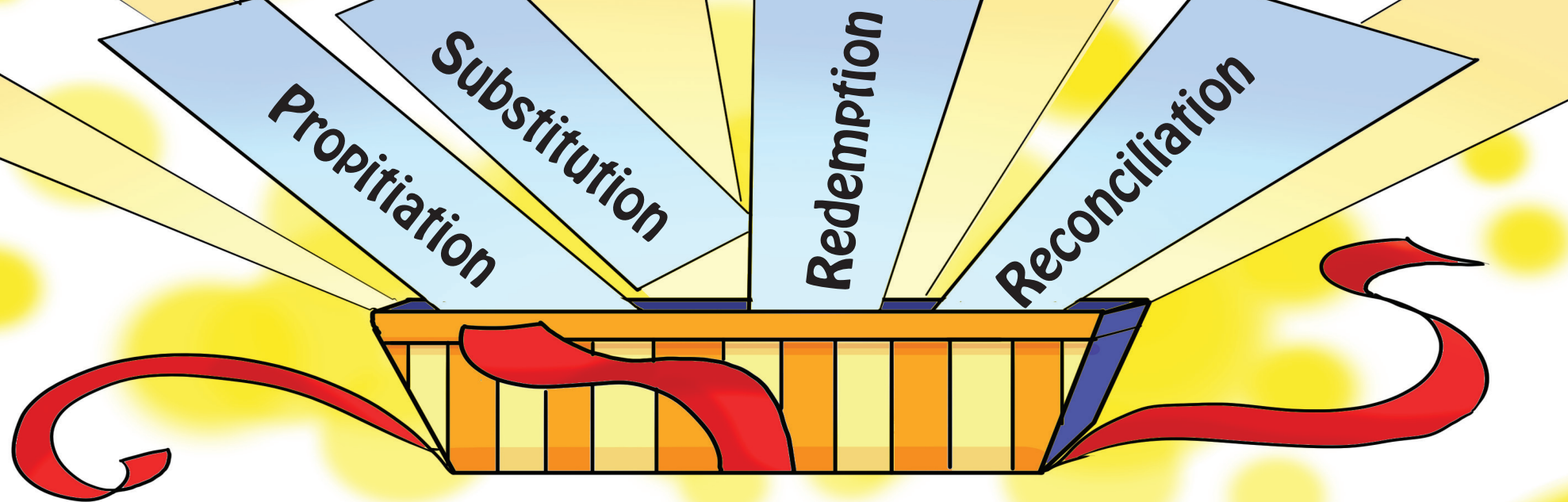
4. Reconciliation



For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility. Ephesians 2:14 ESV.

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. Romans 5:10 ESV.

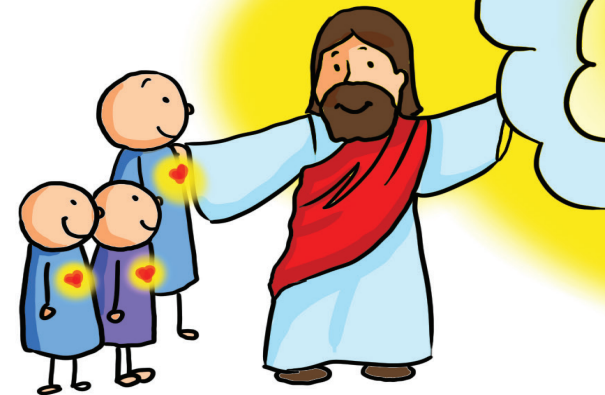
The act of reconciliation between God and us is God's doing, not our own. In His great love and mercy, He has reconciled us to Himself.



Propitiation, substitution, reconciliation, and redemption are different ways to describe the act of the merciful God who loves us. Salvation is His free gift to us, a gift we have done nothing and can do nothing to deserve.

Jesus, the sinless Savior, was the only one who could be sacrificed for our sins. He lived a human life of obedience to God, a life without sin. Had He sinned, then He would have had to die for His own sins, instead of ours. However, He didn't sin.

He upheld God's holiness in His life, and therefore deserved no punishment for sin. He took our sins upon Himself. He substituted Himself for each one of us. He took both our guilt and punishment upon Himself, and in doing so made it possible for each of us to be reconciled with God.



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