

A Word Study by Pastor Melissa Scott, Ph.D.

The word “Ransom” Part 1

Mark 10:45 KJV

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

Mark 10:45 CEV

“The Son of Man did not come to be a slave master but a slave who will give his life to rescue many people.”

Mark 10:45 NCV

“In the same way, the Son of Man did not come to be served. He came to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many people.”

Mark 10:45 Greek Text*

(AB)	(CS)	(DNMS)	(N-NM-S)	(DGMS)	(NGMS)	(AB)	(VIAA – 3S)	(VNAP)	(CH)	(VNAA)				
καὶ	γὰρ	ὁ	υἱὸς	τοῦ	ἀνθρώπου	οὐκ	ἦλθεν	διακονηθῆναι	ἀλλὰ	διακονῆσαι				
even/also	for	(-----the Son of Man-----)				not	did	come	to	be	served	but	to	serve
(CC)	(VNAA)	(DAFS)	(NAFS)	(NPGM-3S)	(NANS)	(PG)	(AP-GM-P)							
καὶ	δοῦναι	τὴν	ψυχὴν	αὐτοῦ	<u>λύτρον</u>	ἀντὶ	πολλῶν.							
and	to	give	the	life	of	him	“ransom”	<u>on behalf/</u>	(of)	many				
								in	place					

* The Greek text is given with an English translation below it, and morphological tags above it. For a key to understanding the morphological tags, see “Scott Key to Greek Morphological Tags” in Pastor’s Library webpage.

Etymological & Morphological Study of “ransom” & λυτρον

The English noun “ransom” appears in the early 13th C. AD. Definition: “a sum paid for the release of a captive or prisoner.” The word “ransom” came into the English language from the Old French *rançon*, via the Old Latin word from which we get the English word “redeem.”

The Latin *redemptionem* comes into the English stream c. 1425 AD.**

***Redemere* is a compound of *re*, meaning “back” or “again,” and *emere*, meaning “to procure, gain, take, buy.”**

**It is noteworthy that in Wycliffite parallel versions in the 1380s – 1450s in Mark 10:45 the word “redempcioun” (redemption) appears and right at its side are the words “or azen biying” (“or again buying”). The need to explain the word “redempcioun” makes it obvious that the word had only recently been introduced.

According to Strong’s Concordance the English word “ransom” and “ransomed” occur 13 times in the Old Testament and 3 times in the New Testament. This is in contrast to the words for “redeem,” “redeemed,” “redeemer,” “redemption,” etc., which occur over 100 times in the Old Testament and 22 times in the New Testament, being represented by different Hebrew and Greek words.

Word Study on “Ransom” Part 1

The Greek word representing “ransom” is λυτρον (*lutron*). It is comprised of the stem λυ or λύω, which means “to loosen,” and is used of animals that are tied up, clothing, shoes, etc., 44 times in the New Testament. The ending τρον is a contraction of τηριον (*terion*) denoting the means by which the action is carried out or the place of action. i.e. θεατρον (*theatron*, theater) is a place of seeing (a play or drama). λυτρον initially would carry the sense of “the place or means of loosening, undoing or setting free.” Eventually the word was used for manumission (the emancipation of slaves).

From the word λυτρον a new word group emerged. The verb λυτροω (*lutroō*), λυτρωσις (*lutrōsis*) and compounds with prefixes such as απο, αντι, and εκ.

The noun λυτρον in the Septuagint (LXX)

The noun λυτρον is used to translate 4 different Hebrew words:

- 1) גאל (G’L) 5 times: Leviticus 25:24, 26, 51, 52 and Leviticus 27:31
- 2) פדה (PDH) 7 times: Exodus 21:30, Leviticus 19:20, Numbers 3:46, 48, 49, 51, Numbers 18:15
- 3) כפר (KPR) 6 times: Exodus 21:30, 30:12, Numbers 35:31, 32, Proverbs 6:35, 13:8
- 4) מחר (MHR) 1 time: Isaiah 45:13

גאל (G’L), when translated into English, uses “redemption” and/or “redeem.”

פדה (PDH), when translated into English, uses “ransom, redeem, redemption.”

כפר (KPR), when translated into English, uses “sum of money,” “ransom,” also “satisfaction.”

מחר (MHR), when translated into English, uses “price.”

Each of these has a human being or creation as the subject vs. the verb λυτρον that occurs 99 times in the Septuagint, and 88 of the 99 times the words are גאל (G’L) and פדה (PDH). 73 of the 88 גאל (G’L) occurrences Yahweh is the subject!

גאל (G’L) has a familial responsibility – a kin or next of kin requirement, while the Hebrew word פדה (PDH) has *no* familial responsibility. This also carries a “commercial” concept.

גאל (G’L) as a verb = λυτρον (kin concept is very present.)

For example: Stand up for a relative where blood has been shed: גאל References: Numbers 35:12, 19, 21, 24, 25, 27² Deut. 19:6, 12 Josh 20:3, 5, 9

For example: The family name or line is in danger of coming to an end. Reference: Ruth 3:13

For example: The land that was previously owned by family/relative now falls into the possession of a stranger. References: Leviticus 25:26 and 25:33

For example: A family member is sold into slavery. Reference: Leviticus 25:48

Word Study on “Ransom” Part 1

לָאָל (G’L) is used often to convey deliverance out of Egypt or the release of those carried away into captivity in Babylon, etc. It is important to note that Yahweh, through Moses (for example) freed the people out of Egypt, but Yahweh did not pay a ransom to the oppressors of the people. (Plagues, yes. Ransom, no.) The institution of the Passover was not a ransom to the oppressors either.

פָּדָה (PDH) is used in deliverance passages such as Deut. 7:8, 9:36, 13:5, 15:15, 24:18; many times the use of פָּדָה will be deliverance from trouble and iniquity.

Dead Sea Scrolls

1Q^h the verb פָּדָה occurs 4 times – all 4 times the word means “to save” or “to deliver.” The “ransom” concept is missing. Furthermore, לָאָל (G’L) seems to be missing as though this word לָאָל was perhaps avoided.

The verb לָאָל (stem) – 18 of the 43 occurrences have a legal “payment” ransom requirement. 18 times humankind is the subject and not Yahweh. The bulk of these examples (ransom or payment) are in Leviticus 25 & 27.

פָּדָה – 10 of the 43 occurrences carry an absolute payment, ransom concept.

Noun Development λυτρωσις (LXX)

λυτρωσις occurs 8 times – 4 times it is translating לָאָל (G’L), and 4 times it is translating פָּדָה (PDH).

In half of the examples a payment is required. The other half have a framework similar to Psalm 130:7-8: “And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities....”

Clearly, Yahweh’s grace and mercy with no “ransom” requirement.

λυτρωτης occurs twice: 1) Psalm 19:14 and 1) Psalm 78:35 (Psalm 19:14 has “... O LORD...my redeemer.”)

Conclusion: Based on the examples, a “ransom” is not always present (i.e. a hostile concept of payment or else.) In the many cases where Yahweh is the subject, He NEVER pays the oppressor of His people a ransom – the redemption concept or meaning has a substitutionary meaning or value.

(Other words will carry the idea of a vicarious substitute as well. i.e. the temple tax required will fall under another study of the word כִּפָּר KPR etc., and its corresponding Greek words ιλασκομαι, αφιρειν, ανταλλαγμα, etc.; and the study of Atonement.)