

PSA Examined**Article Series:**

Article #12:
Did Jesus Have
to Die for God to
Forgive Sins?



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Welcome to the 12th article in this series on Penal

Substitutionary Atonement (PSA). (If you havenâ??t already, you can start at [the PSA series intro](#) to get caught up.) This marks a slight shift in the series because in this article and the next several ones, weâ??ll be looking at the strongest verses used to support PSA.

Today, weâ??re opening with a doozy that can establish PSA as true all by itselfâ?? assuming that PSAâ??s understanding is correct.

The Verse

Here it is with some context.

Matthew 26:26-30

26 While they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, â??Take, eat; this is My body.â?• **27** And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, â??Drink from it, all of you; **28** for **this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.** **29** â??But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I

drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.

30 After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The PSA understanding is that "for forgiveness of sins" means that without Jesus dying as a penal substitutionary sacrifice to take the punishment from God for our sin vicariously in our place as our substitute, God couldn't have forgiven sins.

Let me front-load by saying that the PSA translation of the verse is valid.

The translation "for forgiveness of sins" is within the ranges of meaning for all of the Greek words, it doesn't violate the immediate context, and the verse makes perfect sense with that understanding. Of course we'll look at the words deeply later in the article, but PSA isn't twisting the text here because their understanding is valid and legitimate based solely on the Greek words and grammar.

However, just because a translation is legitimate according to Greek grammar doesn't make it correct, especially when there are other legitimate translation options.

For example, the PSA understanding raises a bunch of issues that we talked about way back in [the article on PSA's second pillar](#), which is that God *must* punish all sin. None of those issues are fatal for PSA, but they do require holding some very specific views that I think would make many Christians very uncomfortable. (*I recommend that you read that article for more information, especially because I'll reference it regularly throughout this one.*)

We'll spend the vast majority of this article looking at the Greek word translated "forgiveness" in that passage. But before we do that, we'll look at the verb form of that Greek word for context.

Here we go.

The verb form: ἀφίημι (aphiēmi)

The verb form of the word used in Matthew 26:28 is ἀφίημι (aphiēmi). It's used 146 times in the New Testament and the lexical summary on Biblehub.com covers the overall meaning quite well

1. to send forth
{in various applications (as follow)}

HELPS word studies reiterates this point.

863 ἀφίημι (from 575 /ἀφίημι, ἀφίημι, ἀφίημι, ἀφίημι) properly, **send away; release (discharge).**

It's translated as some form of forgive 47 times out of 146 occurrences in the KJV, so about one-third of the time. (Most other translations are similar.)

For a more complete understanding, I've copy/pasted the short definitions from Thayer's lexicon below. You can read the full definitions [here](#), though you'll need to know some Greek to fully understand what's going on. We'll get into specifics later, but notice the primary and most common meaning of the word.

1. **to send away;**
 - a. **to bid go away or depart:** ἵνα ἵπται ἵνα ἵπται ἵνα ἵπται, Matthew 13:36 (others refer this to 3 below); ἵνα ἵπται ἵνα ἵπται ἵνα ἵπται, **of a husband putting away his wife**, 1 Corinthians 7:11-13
 - b. **to send forth**, yield up, emit
 - c. **to let go**, let alone, let be; ἵνα. **to disregard:** Matthew 15:14. ἵνα. to leave, not to discuss now, ἵνα **to omit, neglect** ἵνα
 - d. **to let go, give up, a debt, by not demanding it** (opposed to ἵνα ἵπται ἵνα ἵπται, John 20:23), i. e. **to remit, forgive** (BP note: this letter is oddly folded into ἵνα ἵπται on Biblehub.)
 - e. to give up, keep no longer
2. **to permit, allow, not to hinder;**
 - a. followed by a present infinitive
 - b. without an infinitive: Matthew 3:15 (ἵνα ἵπται ἵνα ἵπται permit it just now)
 - c. ἵνα ἵπται ἵνα ἵπται ἵνα ἵπται, to give up a thing to one
 - d. followed by ἵνα ἵπται:
 - e. followed by the simple hortative subjunctive
3. **to leave, go away from one; to depart from anyone,**
 - a. in order to go to another place
 - b. to depart from one whom one wishes to quit
 - c. to depart from one and leave him to himself, so that all mutual claims are abandoned
 - d. **to desert one (wrongfully)**
 - e. to go away leaving something behind
 - f. to leave one by not taking him as a companion
 - g. to leave on dying, leave behind one: ἵνα ἵπται ἵνα ἵπται, Matthew 22:25; Mark 12:20, 22 (Luke 20:31 ἵνα ἵπται ἵνα ἵπται). h. to leave so that what is left may remain, leave remaining:

Since we're examining forgiveness in this article, we'll look at the definition that relates to forgiveness, #1.d.

to let go, give up, a debt, by not demanding it (opposed to ἵνα ἵπται ἵνα ἵπται, John 20:23), i. e. **to remit, forgive**

How does that definition work with PSA? PSA explicitly says that God isn't able to let go of our sins, nor to give up, a debt, by not demanding it. That's one of the core tenets of PSA, that God cannot forgive sin without first punishing it fully and completely.

That's a problem because it makes PSA go directly **against** the definition of the relevant Greek words.

Directly against.

Completely contrary.

This isn't a nuance difference either, it's a meaning that's diametrically opposed to what PSA insists it must be, and what it indeed must be in order for PSA to be true. **That weakens PSA's case dramatically.** (And yes, I know that this article was supposed to be about PSA's strongest verses; however, it's relevant so we're examining it.)

Anyway, for the sake of argument, we'll ignore this issue for now and look at the other uses.

Starting with the third definition of ἀπολείπειν, here's an example:

Revelation 2:4

ESV: But I have this against you, that you have **abandoned** (ἀφῆκε) the love you had at first.

NASB 95: But I have this against you, that you have **left** (ἀφῆκε) your first love.

The second common meaning is to ἀποτρέφω/ἀποτρέφω, and here's an example of that:

Mark 10:14

NASB 95: But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, ἀποτρέφω **Permit** (ἀφῆκε) the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

NASB 2020: But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, ἀποτρέφω **Allow** (ἀφῆκε) the children to come to Me; do not forbid them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

And the primary meaning is to ἀποστέλλω, and here's one example of that usage:

Matthew 13:36 (NKJV)

Then Jesus **sent** the multitude **away** (ἀπέστειλε, it's split there) and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, ἀποστέλλω Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.

That nuance of ἀποστέλλω is why it can be translated ἀποστέλλω divorce; it's rare, but it happens.

1 Corinthians 7:10-13

10 But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband **11** (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not **divorce (aphiÃ©mi)** his wife. **12** But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not **divorce (aphiÃ©mi)** her. **13** And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not **send** her husband **away (aphiÃ©mi, itâ??s split here too)**.

And most relevant for this article is the nuance of â??forgiveâ??. Itâ??s sorted under the nuance of â??let goâ?•, under definition #1.d. (*send away*). It seems obvious how â??let goâ?• is related to forgiveness. Hereâ??s one of the most recognizable uses of the word in that context:

Matthew 6:9-13

9 â??Pray, then, in this way:
â??Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

10 â??Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

11 â??Give us this day our daily bread.

12 â??And **forgive (aphiÃ©mi)** us our debts, as we also have **forgiven (aphiÃ©mi)** our debtors.

13â??And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.â??]

14â??For if you **forgive (aphiÃ©mi)** others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also **forgive (aphiÃ©mi)** you. **15** â??But if you do not **forgive (aphiÃ©mi)** others, then your Father will not **forgive (aphiÃ©mi)** your transgressions.

(Sidenote: the word translated â??transgressionsâ?• here is â??î?±î?î?¼î?±â?• (*paraptÃ³ma*), and it implies that the wrongdoing was either unconscious or unintentional. It doesnâ??t require that, but it implies it. Thus, it makes more sense to translate it as â??misstepsâ?•, or â??[moral] mistakesâ?• to get that nuance across.)

It seems clear that forgiveness is in view here.

Thatâ??s not surprising, or at least it shouldnâ??t be.

Again, Iâ??d like to point out that â??aphiÃ©miâ?• is only translated as a form of â??forgiveâ?• about one third of the time. So while it definitely can mean â??forgiveâ?•, it doesnâ??t only mean forgive.

The Primary definition is to ἀφῆσθαι or ἀφῆσθαι.

Please keep that in mind as we move to the noun form, which is the form used in our focus verse, Matthew 26:28.

The noun form: ἀφῆσις (aphesis)

The word translated ἀφῆσις in Matthew 26:28 is ἀφῆσις (aphesis). It's only used 17 times in the New Testament, so we'll look at all of them in some detail. Before we do, here are a few quotes from lexicons to get us started:

Definition: Forgiveness, **release**, remission

Meaning: **a sending away, a letting go, a release**, pardon, complete forgiveness.

Word Origin: Derived from the Greek verb ἀφῆμι (aphēmi), meaning **to send away** or **to release**.

Corresponding Greek / Hebrew Entries: ἀφῆσις H5547 (ἁφῆσις, selichah): Forgiveness, pardon

כַּפָּרָה H3722 (כַּפָּרָה, kaphar): To cover, to atone, to forgive

Usage: In the New Testament, ἀφῆσις primarily refers to the act of forgiving or the state of being forgiven. **It conveys the idea of releasing someone from a debt or obligation, often used in the context of sin.** The term emphasizes the liberation and pardon granted by God to sinners through Jesus Christ.

Cultural and Historical Background: **In the Greco-Roman world, the concept of ἀφῆσις was understood in legal and financial contexts, often referring to the cancellation of debts or the release of prisoners.** In Jewish tradition, the idea of forgiveness was deeply rooted in the sacrificial system and the Day of Atonement, where sins were symbolically transferred and removed. **The New Testament writers, particularly in the context of Jesus' ministry, expanded this concept to signify spiritual liberation and reconciliation with God.**

And another one:

Cognate: 859 ἁφῆσις (from 863 ἀφῆμι, ἀφῆμι) **properly, something sent away**; i.e. remission (ἀφῆσις), **releasing someone from obligation or debt.** See 863 (ἀφῆμι).

And from Thayer's: (*The bold formatting is original, the red was added by me.*)

19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.â?•

20 Then He closed the book, and gave *it* back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, â??
Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.â?•

The NASB 95 translates that highlighted line with a slightly different nuance.

NASB 95 (*Itâ??s in all CAPs because the NASB puts OT quotations in caps*)

HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM **RELEASE** (aphesis) TO THE CAPTIVES,

So we have â??releaseâ?• in the NASB 95 and â??libertyâ?• in the NKJV, which are both excellent translations. **â??Releaseâ?• and â??libertyâ?• meet perfectly in the word â??liberationâ?•**, which I think is an ideal translation here. Thus, it would be â??*He has sent me to proclaim **liberation** (aphesis) to the captives*â??, which fits the context perfectly and I think makes more sense than â??libertyâ?• or â??releaseâ?•.

Importantly, this is Jesus telling us what He came to do using the word â??aphesisâ?•, and the context clearly indicates that He does not mean â??forgivenessâ?•.

Thatâ??s important.

And yes, I did look up the verse that Jesus was reading from/quoting and looked up the two Hebrew words as well. They are â??x?Ö°Ö¼x"x?Ö¹x"â?• ([deror](#)) and â??x?Ö°x?Ö¼x?Ö¹x?Ö·â?• ([peqach-qoach](#)), and theyâ??re translated â??libertyâ?• and â??freedomâ?• respectively in the NASB 95, and those are excellent translations of those words. That reinforces what we just saw, that â??releaseâ?•/â?•libertyâ?• seems to be the focus of the word in this verse, though again, â??liberationâ?• seems like the best translation of the word in my opinion.

Jesus uses â??aphesisâ?• to mean liberation to describe why He was sent.

Again, thatâ??s important.

Now, letâ??s follow that with a verse where it clearly does mean â??forgivenessâ?•.

Mark 3:29

Hereâ??s the verse with its context:

Mark 3:22-30

22 The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, â??He is possessed by Beelzebul,â?• and â??**He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.**â?• 23 And He

called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? **24** If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. **25** If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. **26** If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! **27** But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.

28 Truly I say to you, **all sins shall be forgiven (aphisimi, the verb form) the sons of men**, and whatever blasphemies they utter; **29** but **whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness (aphesis)**, but is guilty of an eternal sin. **30** **because they were saying, He has an unclean spirit.**

I suppose you could make the argument that it's not talking about forgiveness here, but I don't think it would be convincing. It is interesting to me that Jesus casting out demons is part of the immediate context, but again, it seems to clearly mean "forgiveness" here.

Moving on.

Acts 13:38

In this passage, Paul and Barnabas had arrived in town and gone to the local synagogue. After the scripture reading, the synagogue official asked if they had anything to say. Paul, of course, starts talking about Jesus, and he finishes his sermon this way.

Acts 13:32-42

32 And we preach to you the **good news of the promise** made to the fathers, **33** that **God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus**, as it is also written in the second Psalm, "YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU." **34** As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: "I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID." **35** Therefore He also says in another Psalm, "YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY." **36** For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; **37** but **He whom God raised did not undergo decay.** **38** Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him **forgiveness (aphesis) of sins** is proclaimed to you, **39** and through Him everyone who believes is **freed** from all things, from which you could not be **freed** through the Law of Moses. **40** Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you:

41 BEHOLD, YOU SCOFFERS, AND MARVEL, AND PERISH; FOR I AM ACCOMPLISHING A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK WHICH YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE, THOUGH SOMEONE SHOULD DESCRIBE IT TO YOU.

42 As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath.

So, this might take a moment to unpack?

First

The Greek word translated into the English phrase "preach" (the good news) is $\epsilon\upsilon\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\acute{\iota}\zeta\omicron$ (euaggelizō), and that's exactly what it means:

2097 euaggelízō (from 2095 /εὔ, "good, well" and angellō, "announce, herald") properly, proclaim the good message (good news). In the NT, 2097 (euaggelízō) refers to sharing the full Gospel of Christ literally, "gospelizing" that announces the complete message of the good news (the Lord's glad tidings).

It's usually translated "preach/proclaim the gospel" in most places in most translations, though sometimes it's shorted in translation to merely "preach/proclaim". There's literally not a single verse in the entire New Testament where it doesn't refer to preaching the gospel. (*Though, some might say that Luke 1:19 "Gabriel appearing to Zacharias" isn't.*)

This is the normal Greek verb for "preaching the gospel".

So Paul was proclaiming the gospel, and thus what he said afterwards is the gospel.

That's important.

Second

Consider the phrase: "we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers". Paul then speaks about Jesus's resurrection and how He didn't undergo decay. This seems to be a clear allusion to Psalm 16:10, which Paul then quotes just a few verses later in verse 35. Here's the verse with some context, but it's important that **this is a Psalm of David**. Please remember that because Paul uses that in his argument.

Psalm 16:8-11

8 I have set the LORD continually before me;
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will dwell securely.

10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

11 You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Remember from [the article on death in this PSA series](#) that Sheol is simply the place of the dead. (In Acts 2, Peter applies this Psalm to Jesus as well, and it sounds a lot like what Paul says in Acts 13.)

This expectation of a resurrection from the dead is present in many places in the Old Testament, such as the following:

Job 19:25-27

25 As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives,
And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.

26 Even after my skin is destroyed,
Yet from my flesh I shall see God;

27 Whom I myself shall behold,
And whom my eyes will see and not another.
My heart faints within me!

The following isn't a Psalm of David, it's a Psalm of the sons of Korah.

Psalm 49:5-14

5 Why should I fear in days of adversity,
When the iniquity of my foes surrounds me,

6 Even those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the abundance of their riches?

7 No man can by any means redeem his brother
Or give to God a ransom for him?

8 For the redemption of his soul is costly,
And he should cease *trying* forever?

9 That he should live on eternally,
That he should not undergo decay.

10 For he sees *that even* wise men die;
The stupid and the senseless alike perish

And leave their wealth to others.

11 Their inner thought is *that* their houses are forever
And their dwelling places to all generations;
They have called their lands after their own names.

12 But man in *his* pomp will not endure;
He is like the beasts that perish.

13 This is the way of those who are foolish,
And of those after them who approve their words.

Selah.

14 As sheep they are appointed for Sheol;
Death shall be their shepherd;
And the upright shall rule over them in the morning,
And their form shall be for Sheol to consume
So that they have no habitation.

15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol,
For He will receive me.

Selah.

16 Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich,
When the glory of his house is increased;

17 For when he dies he will carry nothing away;
His glory will not descend after him.

18 Though while he lives he congratulates himselfâ??
And though *men* praise you when you do well for yourselfâ??

19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers;
They will never see the light.

20 Man in *his* pomp, yet without understanding,
Is like the beasts that perish.

And in Daniel:

Daniel 12:1-3

1 â??Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; **and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.** **2** â??Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will

awake, these to **everlasting life**, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt. **3** Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

There are other places, but those should suffice.

This promised resurrection from the dead is apparently the promise made to the fathers that Paul was talking about, because verse 33 says it's fulfilled in Jesus's resurrection.

In other places in the New Testament, and as we covered in [this article](#), God is clear that we are raised from the dead because Jesus was raised from the dead. This is part of our hope as Christians.

Romans 6:5-7

5 For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly **we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection**, **6** knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; **7** for he who has died is freed from sin.

And again:

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

20 But now **Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep**. **21** For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. **22** For as in Adam all die, so also **in Christ all will be made alive**. **23** But each in his own order: **Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,**

The "first fruits" is a reference to the Levitical sacrificial system, which we covered in [this article](#). As a quick recap, the first fruits symbolized that the harvest was successful and that there would be more coming. Thus, since Jesus was raised, the implication is that we will be raised as well.

1 Corinthians 15 speaks of this more further on in the chapter.

1 Corinthians 15:51-57

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye**, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and **the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed**. **53** For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. **54** So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

55 O Death, where *is* your sting?
O Hades, where *is* your victory?

56 The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. **57** But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here we see the promise of a future resurrection, just like what was promised in the Old Testament. In this resurrection, we will all be changed from having corrupted bodies to having incorruptible bodies. (*This would be a liberation from the corruption of sin!*)

This is the eternal life that scripture speaks of.

This is the gospel.

Paul was preaching the gospel and it's about the resurrection from the dead. Please keep that in mind.

Third

Now we can return to our analysis of aphesis. Please read the relevant section again with the above context in mind.

Acts 13:32-40

32 And we preach to you the **good news of the promise** made to the fathers, **33** that God has fulfilled this **promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus**, as it is also written in the second Psalm, YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU. **34** As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID. **35** Therefore He also says in another Psalm, YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. **36** For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; **37** but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. **38** Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness (aphesis) of sins is proclaimed to you, **39** and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. **40** Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you:

Paul's argument is that the Psalm couldn't apply to David because David died and underwent decay. Paul then says it was about Jesus the Holy One of God because Jesus didn't undergo decay.

The next verse starts with therefore.

Just like in English, the Greek word translated therefore there (*ὥστε*) means exactly what therefore means in English: that the thing(s) that come afterward follow logically from the thing(s) previously mentioned. Thus, Paul directly ties the resurrection from the dead to the aphesis of sins with the word therefore. What follows the therefore is thus intimately connected to, and flows from, what's before it.

ἵνα ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἁμαρτανίου ἵνα ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἁμαρτανίου, **from the dominion of sin, Romans 6:18, 22**; ἵνα ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἁμαρτανίου ἵνα ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἁμαρτανίου, **to liberate from bondage** (see ἵνα ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἁμαρτανίου) and to bring (transfer) into etc. (see ἵνα ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἁμαρτανίου, C. 1), Romans 8:21; with a dative commodi, ἵνα ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἁμαρτανίου, that we might be possessors of liberty, Galatians 5:1; cf. Buttman, Å§ 133, 12 (and Lightfoot at the passage).

Notice the reference to John 8.

John 8:31-36

31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ἅπασι ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἁμαρτανίου, **if you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine**; **32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free (eleuthero^{Å3})**. **33** They answered Him, ἅπασι ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἁμαρτανίου, **We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, You will become free?**

34 Jesus answered them, ἅπασι ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἁμαρτανίου, **Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin**. **35** ἅπασι ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἁμαρτανίου, **The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever**. **36** ἅπασι ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἁμαρτανίου, **So if the Son makes you free (eleuthero^{Å3})**, you will be free (ἵνα ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἁμαρτανίου, *the adjective form of the verb*) indeed.

This is Jesus speaking about making us free from sin in a very famous passage. Again, **remember that Romans 6:22 says that the outcome of being freed from sin is eternal life**. That seems like very important context to take back to Acts, which we'll do now.

Paul is speaking about resurrection and being freed from sin throughout Romans chapter 6, which is reinforced by the 1 Corinthians 15 passage we saw above. It seems like Acts 13 is about the same thing.

There's a solid biblical case that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, and obviously sin won't be a problem in His presence. And then once we are raised in incorruptible bodies, sin still won't be a problem. (*Which we covered in detail in [this article](#)*.) Thus, once we have died, we are freed from sin because both states after death won't involve sin.

Acts 13:39

and through Him **everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses**.

The Law of Moses could not free us from sin; we needed Jesus to be freed from sin.

Once we are resurrected in a state of being freed from sin (by the cleansing power of Jesus's blood as we saw in [this article](#)), we get to live in God's presence forever on the New Earth.

**Being raised/resurrected from the dead into incorruptible bodies that have been freed from sin
IS the promise of eternal life.**

That's the hope of salvation, it's the gospel.

The most famous verse in the Bible, the one that even unbelievers often know, testifies to this:

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

Again, forgiveness of sins can't do that.

If we accept the PSA premise that without the forgiveness of sins, eternal life is impossible, that actually doesn't change much because as we saw in [the article on why Jesus had to die](#), forgiveness of sins isn't enough. We also need to be cleansed of our sins (*liberated from them*) before we can get incorruptible bodies and live in God's presence on the New Earth. As we covered in that article (*with evidence*), even if we were forgiven, God's presence would automatically kill our corrupted mortal bodies without Jesus's blood cleansing us of our sins.

In our Acts 13 passage, scripture begins with Paul preaching the gospel. So if liberation from sins directly leads to eternal life in the resurrection, then liberation from sins makes perfect sense as a translation.

It fits perfectly.

Translation options

Interestingly, there's a bit of a difference in translations in Acts 13:

Acts 13:39

NASB 95: and through Him everyone who believes is **freed** from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

NKJV: and by Him everyone who believes is **justified** from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

With all the context we just looked at, I would say that the NASB 95 has the better nuance of translation with **freed**. That's not certain of course, but I think it makes more sense.

Now, it doesn't seem to make a lot of sense to mix 'freedom' with 'forgiveness'. 'Freedom' makes more sense with liberty/release/liberation, and 'forgiveness' with 'justified', like so:

Acts 13:38-39 (NASB 95, modified)

1. **38** Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him **forgiveness of (aphesis)** sins is proclaimed to you, **39** and through Him everyone who believes is **freed justified** from all things, from which you could not be **freed justified** through the Law of Moses.
 - o **OR**
2. **38** Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him **forgiveness liberation from (aphesis)** sins is proclaimed to you, **39** and through Him everyone who believes is **freed** from all things, from which you could not be **freed** through the Law of Moses.

It doesn't seem like mixing the definitions makes a lot of sense, so those are your options if you don't mix them. The NKJV takes the first approach, which is internally consistent. The second approach seems more consistent with chapter Romans 6 though.

Ultimately, both translations/understandings are possible, the question is which has the better contextual claim.

If you consider the context of Luke 4, Romans chapter 6, and 1 Corinthians 15, it seems like 'liberation' has the better claim in my opinion. If you disagree, that's perfectly fine since both are possible. The 'forgiveness' view lacks a contextual reason for being there, but it's not unlike Paul to go on a rabbit trail, so that's not conclusive.

That said, 'liberation from sin' makes far more sense with the talk of the resurrection.

As we covered in [the article on death](#), sin directly causes death. Thus, if someone has been liberated/set free from sin, he would no longer need to die. We saw in [the article on why Jesus had to die](#) that this is indeed what allows for eternal life, Jesus's blood cleansing us from our sins (*thus liberating us from them*) so that we could live forever on the New Earth in glorified and incorruptible bodies.

Remember that Romans chapter 6 says that the outcome of being freed from sin is eternal life. Thus, 'liberation from sin' makes perfect sense in the context of the resurrection.

Conversely, from a PSA perspective, Jesus's resurrection didn't affect our salvation or sinfulness, only His death. Now, a PSA adherent will likely respond that without God's forgiveness, we couldn't be raised from the dead or have eternal life because God's character would require Him to sentence us to death for our sin. Thus, the PSA argument goes that resurrection is connected to forgiveness because without forgiveness, there could be no resurrection.

I personally think the former, non-PSA option makes more sense, but the PSA version is coherent.

Ephesians 1:7 & Colossians 1:14

We'll look at these verses together because the relevant parts are worded almost exactly the same. However, the context around each is different and important for both. But before we get to the verse, we need to recap what "redemption" means because it shows up in these verses. (*These verses are why we couldn't tackle Matthew 26:28 before we'd looked at redemption in [the article on redemption](#).*)

As a recap: "redemption" refers to liberation from slavery or captivity, usually by paying a price. In Jesus's case, this price was metaphorical, like how a soldier pays the ultimate price when he sacrifices himself to accomplish his mission. If you want more detail, including the complete word study on "redemption", please see [my article on redemption](#).

Here are the verses mostly in isolation, and we'll look at them with context in a moment.

Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness (aphesis) of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

Colossians 1:13-14 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness (aphesis) of sins.

It appears that in these verses, "redemption" and "the aphasis of sins" are equated with each other. Each appears to define the other, and thus we can use the clear one (redemption) to define the less clear one ("the aphasis of sins").

That's why these two verses are key.

Now, consider what we just saw in Luke 4:18 where "aphesis" clearly means "liberation". Further, Acts 13 seems to lean that way as well, especially with the context of Romans 6. Given the context of "redemption" being used here since "redemption" means liberation from slavery or captivity that seems to support the idea that the intended nuance here isn't "forgiveness of sins", but rather, "liberation from sins".

This is further confirmed by the fact that "redemption" is an event that happens on a single day:

Ephesians 4:30

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

Further, we just saw that verse in 1 Corinthians 15 which says it will happen: "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye".

Thus, unless you're a PSA adherent who wants to say that our sins are only forgiven at the final judgement and aren't forgiven now, "redemption" seemingly can't refer to forgiveness.

Anyway, we'll look at those verses now with the context, and the context is important.

Colossians 1:14

Here is the verse with context.

Colossians 1:9-17

9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of *it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **10** so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; **11** strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously **12** giving thanks to the Father, **who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.**

13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness (aphesis) of sins.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether **thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities**—all things have been created through Him and for Him. **17** He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Again, we see “aphesis of sins” being used in a context where liberation is central to the theme of the passage. Now, the relevant phrase “*in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness (aphesis) of sins*” appears to be one of Paul’s many interjections and not part of the flow of the passage. You certainly could connect “liberation” to being freed from the powers of darkness and we certainly did in [the previous article](#) but it doesn’t seem to connect to “*the (aphesis) of sins*” in this particular verse.

Again, notice that “redemption” is directly connected with “the (aphesis) of sins”; they appear to be closely intertwined, likely the same thing.

Now, Ephesians:

Ephesians 1:7

Here is the verse with its context.

Ephesians 1:3-10

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, **4** just as He chose us in Him before the

foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love **5 He predestined us to adoption as sons** through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, **6** to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. **7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness (aphesis) of our trespasses**, according to the riches of His grace **8** which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight **9** He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him **10** with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

Now, the highlighted phrases "adoption as sons" and the word "redemption" occur together in another passage.

Romans 8:22-24

22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. **23** And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly **for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies**. **24 For in this hope we were saved.** Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?

Notice something:

In Romans 8, the adoption as sons is the redemption of our bodies.

And immediately afterward, scripture says: "For in this hope we were saved."

Thus, according to Romans 8:

Adoption as sons = redemption of our bodies = the hope of salvation.

Now, because "redemption" means "liberation", consequently, the "redemption of our bodies" means the "liberation of our bodies". The question is, liberation from what? As we've already covered, the liberation from sin when we are transformed from having corruptible bodies marred with sin into having incorruptible bodies free from sin seems like a pretty good option. It becomes an even better option when you realize that our "hope of salvation" is eternal life in those incorruptible bodies.

Again, the hope in which we are saved has to do with **redemption**, which means liberation from captivity or slavery (*from our corrupted mortal bodies into incorruptible bodies?*), which is extremely similar to the "liberation" meaning of "aphesis".

As we saw in the article on redemption, and especially in the previous article, redemption refers to two things in the New Testament:

1. Liberation from being slaves of sin
2. Liberation from the devil's dominion

We covered #2 in exhaustive detail in the previous article, and it's #1's turn today. Please keep in mind what we saw above, that "redemption" = "aphesis of sins", or at least they are closely intertwined.

That makes this next verse extremely important.

Hebrews 9:13-15

13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled **sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh**, **14** how much more will **the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, **cleanse your conscience** from dead works to serve the living God?

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

Remember that "redemption" means "liberation". Thus, we have a phrase that's directly analogous to "aphesis of sins" where the clear meaning is "liberation", not forgiveness.

That's important!

Further, notice the connection between "the redemption of the transgressions" in verse 15 and "sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh" and "cleanse your conscience" in verse 14. As we noted in [the article on why Jesus had to die](#), His death enabled Him to cleanse us of our sins in order to liberate us from sin and cleanse our corrupted mortal bodies.

Thus, the "redemption of the transgressions" seems to be about liberating us from our corrupted mortal bodies by cleansing them.

This idea is restated even more clearly in Titus.

Titus 2:11-14

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, **12** instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, **13** looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, **14** **who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession**, zealous for good deeds.

Now, if we consider everything in this section of the article all at once, we get the following:

Redemption = Liberation

**Adoption as sons = redemption of our bodies = the redemption of transgressions = the
â??aphesisâ?• (*liberation from?*) sins = the hope of salvation**

The â??redemption of our bodiesâ?• happens on a single day, meaning the â??aphesisâ?• (*liberation from?*) sins happens on a single day as well.

(When we get glorified bodies on the New Earth.)

That makes perfect sense with everything weâ??ve seen. Thatâ??s a pretty clear chain that leads directly to the â??cleansing modelâ?• of how Jesus saves us that we saw in [the article on why Jesus had to die](#).

However, it contains no elements of PSA.

To take an on-topic rabbit trail for a moment, last year, I published an article on [two important and ignored reasons that Jesus died](#). I donâ??t want to rehash the whole first half, but the important point is contained in the following verse:

Matthew 1:21

â??And she will bear a son, and you will call His name Jesus **for He will save His people from their sins.**

Jesus means â??Yahweh savesâ?• (*see the linked article for details/proof*). Jesus literally got His name because He was going to â??save His people from their sinsâ?•.

It doesnâ??t say that Jesus will â??save His people from the punishment for their sinsâ?•.

It says He will â??save His people from their sinsâ?•, that is, from the sins themselves.

As we covered in the article on why Jesus had to die, Jesus will save us from our sins by cleansing our corrupted mortal bodies by His blood at the resurrection. And thereafter, we will be forever liberated from sin, and also sinâ??s natural consequence, death.

Thatâ??s how Jesus will â??save us from our sinsâ?•.

Again, Titus speaks directly to this:

Titus 2:11-14

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 **who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession**, zealous for good deeds.

Notice, this is a purpose statement.

This verse explicitly says why Jesus died (â??gave Himself for usâ?), and itâ??s to redeem (i.e. â??liberateâ?) us from â??every lawless deedâ? and â??to purifyâ? us.

Consider that for a moment with the context of Matthew 26:28.

Matthew 26:28 for this is My blood of the covenant, **which is poured out for many for forgiveness of (aphesis = liberation from?) sins.**

Titus 2:14 who gave Himself for us **to redeem (i.e. liberate) us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people** for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

Again, if â??liberation from sinsâ? is the correct understanding, then â??aphesisâ? from sins is a future reality that weâ??ll see at the resurrection on the New Earth.

Here again are the two verses that tie redemption to the â??aphesisâ? of/from sinsâ?:

Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have **redemption** through His blood, **the forgiveness (aphesis) of our trespasses**, according to the riches of His grace

Colossians 1:13-14 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have **redemption, the forgiveness (aphesis) of sins.**

Thus:

- Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14 tie the â??aphesis of sinsâ? to redemption
- Romans 8:23-24 ties the â??redemption of our bodiesâ? to the â??adoption as sonsâ?, and adds thatâ??s the hope of our salvation.
- Hebrews 9:15 speaks of â??redemption of the transgressionsâ?, which again points to liberation, not forgiveness.
- Matthew 1:21 says that Jesus was named â??Jesusâ? (*meaning â??God savesâ?*) because He will â??save His people from their sinsâ?. (*Not forgive them of their sins, nor save them from the punishment for their sins as PSA says.*)

None of those seem related to â??forgivenessâ?, but they all seem connected to â??liberationâ?.

Moving on to the next verse.

Luke 1:77

This is Zacharias prophesying about his son, John the Baptizer. And please notice, he specifically stated to have been filled by the Holy Spirit while he said this. Also, please take special note of the use of "salvation" in verse 71.

Luke 1:67-79

67 And his father **Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:**

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
For **He has visited us and accomplished redemption** for His people,

69 **And has raised up a horn of salvation** for us
In the house of David His servant

70 **As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old**

71 **Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES,
And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;**

72 To show mercy toward our fathers,
And to remember His holy covenant,

73 The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,

74 To grant us that we, **being rescued from the hand of our enemies,**
Might serve Him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

76 "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
For you will go on **BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS;**

77 **To give to His people the knowledge of salvation**
By the forgiveness (aphesis) of their sins,

78 Because of the tender mercy of our God,
With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,

79 **TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH,**
To guide our feet into the way of peace."

Now, "salvation" occurs three times in Zacharias's prophecy.

The first occurrence in verse 69 (*raised up a horn of salvation*) doesn't lend much clarity.

However, *salvation* in verse 71 does.

The first thing to notice is that salvation is *from our enemies* and *all who hate us*. **If you want to say that this verse refers to us being saved from God's wrath as PSA says, then the enemies (*plural*) that we were saved from was God (*singular*).** I don't know a single person who has made this argument, so I won't spend time on it. Contextually, it doesn't make much sense even though there are places where unbelievers are called God's enemies. (*Romans 5:10 and James 4:4*).

Thus, since *salvation from our enemies* in verse 71 isn't referring to God, what enemies are we talking about?

Well, the CAPS indicates that this is a quotation of the Old Testament, and here is what the Holy Spirit inspired him to quote (*verse 10*), with plenty of context around it:

Psalm 106:7-13

7 Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders;
They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses,
But rebelled by the sea, **at the Red Sea**.

8 Nevertheless He saved them for the sake of His name,
That He might make His power known.

9 Thus He rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up,
And He led them through the deeps, as through the wilderness.

10 So He **saved** them from the hand of the one who hated them,
And **redeemed** them from the hand of the enemy.

11 The waters covered their adversaries;
Not one of them was left.

12 Then they believed His words;
They sang His praise.

13 They quickly forgot His works;
They did not wait for His counsel,

As we covered at length in [the previous article](#), the *enemy* in view here is *the* enemy; i.e., the powers of darkness led by Satan. This salvation is about God liberating us from the powers of darkness. It makes no sense for the enemy in Psalm 106 to be God, nor the wrath of God, nor His anger against sin, His justice requiring Him to punish sin, or anything else that is central to PSA.

Notably, we're again seeing the idea of liberation connected with salvation.

The third and final mention of salvation is the phrase “knowledge of salvation” in verse 77, which connects to the verse in Romans 8 that we already looked at:

Romans 8:22-24

22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. **23** And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly **for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies**. **24** **For in this hope we were saved**. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?

Romans 8 seems to concretely tie the “adoption as sons” to “the redemption of our bodies”, and then says “in this hope we were saved”.

Logically speaking, it seems like the “knowledge of salvation **By the (aphesis) of their sins**” in Luke 1:77 should then be speaking of the “adoption as sons” and “the redemption of our bodies” mentioned in Romans 8. As we already covered, the “redemption of our bodies” refers to Jesus liberating (*ransoming/redeeming*) our corrupted mortal bodies from the effects of sin so we can live forever in the New Earth in incorruptible bodies. (*Thus saving us from our sins.*)

Thus, it seems like “liberation from sin” is the correct understanding in this verse as well! but that’s definitely not certain.

Additionally, notice the use of “redemption” in Luke 1:68.

Luke 1:67-68

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

68 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
For **He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,**

While “redemption” can fit into any theory on how we’re saved (*PSA included*), it primarily means liberation from slavery or captivity at a price, as we covered in [the article on redemption](#). PSA can fit, though imperfectly, but “redemption” fits much better with the understanding of Jesus freeing us from slavery to sin, and especially captivity to the enemy.

Hebrews 10:18

Just to front-load, if you haven’t read [my article on the levitical sacrificial system](#), my commentary probably won’t make much sense and you might think I’m ignoring the text. However, if you don’t understand the Old Testament sacrificial system, you’ll assuredly misinterpret Hebrews. Thus, I recommend that you read that article first because, while I’ll briefly recap, I won’t make

the case that I already made in that article.

Hebrews 10:11-18

11 Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time **the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins**; **12** but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, **13** waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. **14** **For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.** **15** And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying,

16 **“THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,”**
He then says,

17 **“AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.”**

18 Now where there is **forgiveness (aphesis)** of these things, there is no longer *any* offering **for sin**.

If you read all of Hebrews chapters 8-10, you'll see two constant themes: (1) the new covenant (2) the Day of **Atonement** Purification. Importantly, the Day of **Atonement** Purification had nothing to do with dealing with man's guilt or sin, and was instead all about cleansing sacred space of sin's corruption/effects. As we've previously covered, under the new covenant, we (*Christians*) are the new sacred space because God dwells in us.

Now, please notice the final two words: “for sin.” As we covered in a few previous articles in this series, in Greek, those two words (**ἵνα καθαρισθῶμεν ἁμαρτίας**) form the Greek phrase that's translated **“sin offering”** in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (*the Septuagint*).

As we've covered at length previously in this PSA series, the **“sin offering”** should be translated **“purification offering”** because its function was to purify sacred space (*Christians under the new covenant*) from sin's corruption/pollution.

Jesus is called a **“sin purification offering”** many times in the New Testament, likely because He cleansed us from the corruption/pollution of sin, and will fully cleanse us on the **“day of redemption”** when we get glorified bodies on the New Earth.

It doesn't make sense that “forgiveness” is in view here because the sin offering wasn't about forgiving sins; **It was about cleansing sin's corruption/pollution.**

(There's a contextual argument that a PSA adherent will likely use as pushback; we'll look at that in a minute.)

As long as sin exists, you still need a ~~sin~~ purification offering to cleanse that sin's corruption, *even if you have been forgiven*. Forgiveness isn't enough to save us, as we saw in [the article on why Jesus had to die](#). We needed cleansing from our sin, not merely forgiveness. (*Though obviously we needed forgiveness as well.*)

If you know what a sin offering does, it makes more sense to read it as liberation.

Hebrews 10:18 (Modified)

17 AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS
I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.

18 Now where there is forgiveness of liberation from (aphesis) these things, there is no longer any ~~sin~~ purification offering. (*The implication being that it's not needed.*)

Again, if Jesus cleansed us from our sins and their resultant pollution/corruption by His blood, we don't need another purification offering. His is the only one we need.

However, understanding it as forgiveness doesn't make any sense because of the very passage that tells us what the sin offering does.

Leviticus 4:29-31 (Modified in accordance with the article on the levitical sacrificial system.)

29 He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slay the ~~sin~~ purification offering at the place of the burnt offering. 30 The priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and all the rest of its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar. 31 Then he shall remove all its fat, just as the fat was removed from the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall offer it up in smoke on the altar for a soothing aroma to the LORD. Thus the priest shall make atonement purification for him, and he will be forgiven.

So if the sin offering could cause forgiveness of their sins and their lawless deeds, why did Jesus need to come?

A PSA adherent could say that the man wasn't forgiven when the offering was made, but rather only after Jesus died. We discussed this possibility in a previous article, but personally, I think it flies in the face of the context.

Further, God forgave people before Jesus died.

In Luke 7:48, Jesus is addressing a sinful woman and says:

Luke 7:48

Then He said to her, Your sins have been forgiven.

The Greek tense there makes it clear that the forgiveness was completed in the past. (*We go through the evidence of this in [the article on PSA's second pillar](#)*.) There's also:

Matthew 9:2

2 And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, **Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven.**

So God definitely forgave people of their sins before Jesus died, and there are more examples in [the article on PSA's second pillar](#). This makes Hebrews 10:18 not make much sense if forgiveness is the correct understanding of aphesis there.

Hebrews 10:17-18

17 AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.

18 Now where there is forgiveness (aphesis) of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Since it seems that God can and did forgive sins before Christ died, then by the logic of Hebrews 10:18 when you translate aphesis as forgiveness there would've been no need for Christ to die because there was forgiveness of sins before he died, and where there is forgiveness (aphesis) of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.

At least, that seems to be the logical conclusion.

Now, a thoughtful PSA adherent will likely use a contextual argument and reply that Hebrews 10:17 is quoting the Old Testament, and in context, that Old Testament quote involves forgiveness.

Jeremiah 31:33-34

33 But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD, I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know the LORD, for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the LORD, **for I will forgive (salach) their iniquity**, and their sin I will remember no more.

We looked at the Hebrew word **salach** ([salach](#)) in the article on PSA's second pillar, and it does indeed mean forgive. Now, at the risk of sounding obvious, I need to point something out which will be apparent on a close reading of the text:

The author of Hebrews chose not to quote the portion of the passage with forgive.

That's important.

Now, we can speculate about why all day, but the obvious reason is because it wasn't relevant to his point. That doesn't make it the correct reason, but it is the obvious one. That in turn begs the question: **if the point of the passage is the forgiveness of sins, why didn't the author quote the part about forgiveness of sins?** He quotes the part immediately after about not remembering the sins, but not the part about forgiving them.

I find that odd (to say the least) if the point is about forgiveness.

If it's about liberation from sin, then it makes perfect sense.

For example:

Hebrews 10:17-18

17 AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.

18 Now where there is forgiveness of liberation from (aphesis) these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.

This understanding would lean on Luke 4:18, which tells us that Jesus came to bring aphasis (in the sense of liberation) to the captives. Once the people have been liberated from their sins and lawless deeds (meaning they aren't doing them anymore), there doesn't need to be a further offering to cleanse/purge the pollution/corruption of sin, because there is no more pollution/corruption from sin because no one is sinning anymore.

Again, this is a future, New Earth in glorified/incorruptible bodies occurrence, not a present one. This actually fits the context of the quotation better, since it speaks of a future time where everyone knows God:

Jeremiah 31:33-34

33 But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD, I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. **34** They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know the LORD, for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the LORD, for I will forgive (salach) their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

This seems to make more sense as a future reality on the New Earth in glorified/incorruptible bodies. Obviously I could be wrong about that, but at least this understanding doesn't make Jesus's death unnecessary like the forgiveness understanding does.

Hebrews 9:22

This one appears to mean *“forgiveness”*. Though, as we’ve covered before in [a previous article](#), the phrase *“And according to the Law, one may almost say”* introduces two limiting factors:

1. The forgiveness mentioned is only *“according to the law”*, and thus doesn’t apply outside of the law, nor is it necessarily how God usually operates
2. The phrase *“one may almost say”* is important because without it, scripture would be wrong because there are many places where forgiveness was given without blood. (*As we covered in that previous article.*)

Anyway, here’s the passage.

Hebrews 9:19-24

19 For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, **20** saying, *“THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD COMMANDED YOU.”* **21** And in the same way *he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood.* **22** *And according to the Law, **one may almost say**, all things are **cleansed with blood**, and without shedding of blood there is no **forgiveness** (aphesis).*

23 Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be **cleansed** with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. **24** For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us

I recommend that you read the whole chapter for context, but the entire thing appears to be about cleansing from sin. Specifically, cleansing the tabernacle using blood, which as we covered in detail before, was done with a ~~sin~~ purification offering. This part is talking about establishing a covenant, but the idea of cleansing is still obviously close at hand. The blood was sprinkled on the people for the covenant, and then on *“both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry”* to purify/cleanse them.

As I read the whole chapter, the phrase: *“and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (aphesis)”* appears to be a parenthetical statement.

It seems like it’s something that the author dropped into the flow of thought, even though it’s not directly related.

*More importantly, this verse only touches on what was normal under the law, and doesn’t even address the (many) exceptions to *“without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (aphesis)”*.*

So while *“aphesis”* seems to mean *“forgiveness”* here, it doesn’t touch on our topic of whether Jesus’s death was necessary for God to forgive our sins.

The ἀφῆσις for the forgiveness of sins verses

There are several verses where ἀφῆσις is used in the Greek phrase that's usually translated: ἀφῆσις for the forgiveness of sins that we haven't covered yet. Some of them don't lend any clarity, and so I grouped them into two categories. The first does help give us some clarity, the second doesn't. Thus, we'll mostly ignore the second group except a quick comment now to point out that both ἀφῆσις for the forgiveness of sins and ἀφῆσις liberation from sins work equally well in those passages.

Here are the verses.

Mark 1:4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness (aphesis) of sins.

Luke 3:3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness (aphesis) of sins;

Matthew 26:28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness (aphesis) of sins.

Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness (aphesis) of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 24:47 and that repentance for forgiveness (aphesis) of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Acts 5:31 He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness (aphesis) of sins.

Acts 26:18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness (aphesis) of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.

Acts 10:43 Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness (aphesis) of sins.

The usual PSA understanding of Matthew 26:28 is that Jesus needed to die in order for God to forgive sins, which means that we have an issue right up front: God forgave people before Christ died.

We already looked at this at length in the article on PSA's second pillar, and recapped it shortly above as well. This is a biblical fact that is impossible to get around. However, the PSA camp does have a response that goes something like this:

PSA Perspective: But God is outside of time, so of course He could forgive sins before (from our perspective) Jesus died because He's outside of time. Thus, from God's perspective, everything is both before (and after) Jesus died.

To support that, they'll often cite a verse in Revelation. However, there's a bit of uncertainty about how it should be translated, so I'll quote from two translations so you can see both options:

Revelation 13:8

NASB 95: All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

NKJV: All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The NASB says that believers' names have been written in the Book of Life since before the foundation of the world. The NKJV says that Jesus was slain since before the foundation of the world.

To support the NKJV understanding, some might cite 2 Peter 3:8 to show that God is outside of time, or at least not limited by time:

2 Peter 3:8

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

To support the NASB 95 understanding, some will likely cite another verse in Revelation:

Revelation 17:8

The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

That's the argument with the support verses.

Personally, I think the NASB 95 understanding that believers' names were written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world makes more sense because it's directly supported by Revelation 17:8!

..but that's just my opinion.

I could be wrong.

The Greek grammar in Revelation 13:8 is unclear, so either is possible. **That makes the PSA understanding legitimate, though not certain. Thus, weâ??ll proceed on the understanding that itâ??s legitimate after one quick comment:**

It seems odd to hinge your entire understanding of salvation being possible on a single verse with unclear grammar. That doesnâ??t seem like a good idea. Itâ??s scripture, so of course a single *clear* verse is enough to establish something as true. However, that verse isnâ??t clear, hence the problem. However, weâ??ll proceed like PSA has the correct understanding, even though I personally think that understanding is the wrong one.

Also, the PSA understanding relies on us redefining *â??aphesisâ??* to mean *â??not holding someoneâ??s sins against him after the sin has been fully punishedâ??*, which is contrary to the lexical definition. Weâ??ve already spent a lot of time on that though, so we wonâ??t do so again.

(Honestly, the more research I do, the more I think this simple fact â?? that PSA must completely redefine forgiveness into something unrecognizable and directly opposite the lexical definitions of the underlying words â?? might be the Achillesâ?? Heel of PSA. If you strip away all the other arguments, youâ??re still left with PSA saying that the God of the Bible cannot forgive. Itâ??s hiding right there in plain sight, even in an English translation.)

Anyway, now back to the *â??for the forgiveness of sinsâ??* verses.

The *â??for the forgiveness of sinsâ??* verses, round #2

Almost this whole article, weâ??ve been contrasting *â??forgiveness of sinsâ??* with the *â??liberation from sinsâ??*. Thus, weâ??ll look at the verses again with *â??liberation from sinsâ??* substituted in to see if they still make sense.

Mark 1:4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance **for the liberation from sins.**

Luke 3:3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance **for the liberation from sins;**

Matthew 26:28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many **for liberation from sins.**

Luke 24:47 and that repentance **for liberation from sins** would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, *â??Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ* **for the liberation from your sins;** and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now, my first thought when I saw the first two verses was: *â??But John the Baptizer didnâ??t liberate people from their sins.â??*

Then I realized something:

According to PSA, John the Baptizer *couldn't* baptize someone *for* the forgiveness of sins, because according to PSA, God requires punishment before he can *forgive* sins (using PSA's altered definition of *forgive*).

Thus, if we accept PSA's premise that God must fully punish a sin before he can *forgive* it (PSA definition), then John the Baptizer was incapable of baptizing *for* the forgiveness of sins because there was no punishment for God to give the *forgiveness* (PSA definition).

That's a problem for PSA.

Now, a lot of people want to use Acts 2:38 to argue that baptism is necessary for salvation. However, I've never heard them argue that John's baptism is necessary for salvation. Perhaps they might say that a believer's baptism replaced John's baptism, and that's reasonable.

However, there's no getting around the fact that whatever John's baptism did, Jesus's work for salvation must have done the same thing (*though on a grander scale*) because the exact same phrase is used of both.

The fact that the grammar/wording of these verses is essentially identical makes that reasonably clear. It seems to me that you'd have to ignore scripture to avoid that.

So, which did John's baptism do:

1. Forgiveness for sin
2. Liberation from sin

Well, we've already covered the problem with the first view from a PSA perspective. Ironically, from a non-PSA perspective, both forgiveness and liberation work equally well. However, there's a passage in Luke that sheds some light on which nuance of *aphesis* was intended.

Luke 7:28-30

28 I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. **29** *When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.* **30** *But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.*

Now, I won't go into a Greek lesson about causal participles because I think the meaning is fairly obvious in English, even if it's clearer in Greek.

It seems like scripture clearly teaches that accepting John's baptism made someone more inclined to accept Jesus. Conversely, it seems like scripture clearly teaches that intentionally rejecting John's baptism made it harder (*maybe impossible*) to accept Jesus.

Thus, it seems that John's baptism had a liberating effect, freeing the people to accept Jesus.

Is that certain?

No.

However, it seems like it's the case. That's further reinforced by the reason John the Baptizer came:

Luke 1:16-17

16 And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. **17** It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, **TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**

And also:

Mark 1:1-4

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

**BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU,
WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY;**

3 THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS,

**MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.**

4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Thus, it seems like John's mission was to prep Israel for Jesus. I had always wondered about that, but looking at these verses, especially Luke 7:30, it seems like John's baptism truly did prepare the people who accepted it to accept Jesus in some way. How isn't spelled out, but it seems like it did indeed enable the people to accept Jesus. (*Or at least made it easier.*)

Thus, it seems like John's baptism did indeed (*partially*) liberate the people from their sins, at least enough that they could accept Jesus.

Thus:

- From a non-PSA perspective, it seems like John's baptism did indeed partially liberate the people from their sins, enabling them to accept Jesus
- Also from a non-PSA perspective, it's possible that God established John's baptism as a requirement before He would forgive their sins. I think it unlikely, but it's possible.
- From a PSA perspective, it doesn't make sense to say that John baptized "for the forgiveness of sins" because there was no penal substitution that PSA says is necessary for God to forgive sins.

Contextually, especially with everything we've seen, it seems that if we must choose one meaning over the other, "liberation from sins" makes more sense. From a non-PSA perspective, it's also possible that both were intended. That seems unlikely, but it is possible.

Final thoughts on the "aphesis" of sins

I would like to reiterate that the PSA translation/understanding of the verse is legitimate based solely on the Greek words and grammar. PSA isn't twisting the text here because the understanding of "forgiveness" vs "liberation" is a matter of the wider biblical context, not the immediate context, words, or grammar of the verse.

Now, that said, in some places it might be possible that both were intended. I personally think it's unlikely, but at least for several of the passages, both "forgiveness" and "liberation" could be intended. However, that's not the case for some of the important, clear ones.

Ephesians 1:7 & Colossians 1:14 seem to concretely make it impossible for the "aphesis" of sins to be forgiveness, because they tie that phrase to the "redemption of our bodies" on the "day of redemption". Redemption is liberation, and Romans 8 says that "in this hope we were saved". Not the hope of forgiveness, but the hope of the liberation of our bodies from sin and its effects, which grants eternal life. (Which of course comes by grace through faith, not as a result of our works.)

Luke 4:18 seems to reinforce this because Jesus Himself tells us why He came in Luke 4:18 using "aphesis", and it has nothing to do with forgiveness and everything to do with liberation.

Thus the "liberation from sins" would refer to Jesus cleansing our corrupted mortal bodies from sin and sin's effects (*decay, death, and disease*) on the "day of redemption" when we begin our lives on the New Earth in God's presence in incorruptible bodies, forever liberated from sin.

The other verses that touch on salvation lean in this direction as well. Some strongly, some weakly. However, the verses where it clearly means "forgiveness" don't appear to touch on our salvation.

Now, of course we need God's forgiveness for our sins. Of course that's the case. I doubt any Christian will deny that, and I certainly don't. **However, I see no evidence in scripture that Jesus had to die before God could forgive us.** None. In fact, there are many passages that contradict that assertion because God forgave before Jesus's death, and seemingly apart from Jesus's death. Additionally, He promises to "not remember our sins against" us in several places. (*Romans 4,*

Ezekiel 18, and Jeremiah 31, just to name a few; weâ??ll look at this more in a moment.)

Further, the prophets talk of the hope of resurrection, which requires liberation from sin, and canâ??t be accomplished by only the forgiveness of sin.

If it wasnâ??t obvious before, Iâ??m now rather firmly in the â??liberation from sinsâ?• camp based on the research in this article.

Additional thoughts on Biblical forgiveness

Now, against the PSA understanding of a single verse â?? Matthew 26:28 â?? there are many passages in scripture that speak of God forgiving freely and abundantly. This is probably the one that sums it up the best, but there are many, many others.

Please donâ??t miss the word â??forâ?• in verse 8.

Isaiah 55:3-9

3 â??Incline your ear and come to Me.

Listen, that you may live;

And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
According to the faithful mercies shown to David.

4 â??Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
A leader and commander for the peoples.

5 â??Behold, you will call a nation you do not know,
And a nation which knows you not will run to you,
Because of the LORD your God, even the Holy One of Israel;
For He has glorified you.â?•

6 Seek the LORD while He may be found;
Call upon Him while He is near.

7 **Let the wicked forsake his way**
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
And let him return to the LORD,
And He will have compassion on him,
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.

8 â??**For** My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,â?• declares the LORD.

9 â??For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are **My ways higher than your ways**

And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Notice the word **וְ** at the beginning of verse 8. It's the Hebrew conjunction **וְ** (**ki**) and here's an overview of its meaning from the lexical page.

וְ functions as one of the most versatile connectors in the Old Testament, appearing roughly 4,481 times. It links clauses, **explains divine actions**, grounds commands, marks conditions, introduces time elements, or adds emphatic force. **Wherever it stands, וְ signals that the inspired writer is about to clarify why, when, that, if, or even indeed. The reader is therefore invited to pause, listen, and receive God's reasoning or emphasis.**

God follows a pronouncement that he will **abundantly pardon** by saying that the way He thinks and behaves is unlike how we think and behave. In context, the conjunction here is used to explain **why** God will **abundantly pardon**: because His ways aren't our ways, nor are His thoughts our thoughts.

I'm sure you've heard verses 8-9 many, many times. But did you realize that they were talking about God offering to abundantly pardon those who repent?

That's significant.

Normally, I'd go through the Hebrew words involved, but there's no nuance there that helps. The word translated **abundantly** is **רַבָּה** (**rabah**), and it means **become many, numerous** (*Brown-Driver-Briggs, definition #1*). The word translated **pardon** is **סָלַח** (**salach**), and it means: **forgive, pardon** (*Brown-Driver-Briggs, the only definition for the form of the word used in Isaiah 55:7.*)

The words mean in Hebrew exactly what they mean in English.

That's a problem for PSA.

Here's another passage:

Romans 4:6-9

6 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

7 BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.

8 BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.

9 Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, **FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

Now, we covered this verse in [the article on PSA's second pillar](#), so we won't spend much time on it here. However, it's worth mentioning again. According to PSA, God actually and literally cannot *not take into account* our sin. According to PSA, He must fully punish all sin.

That doesn't line up with scripture.

There are a lot of verses in scripture about God's forgiveness.

A **LOT**.

We've looked at the underlying Greek and Hebrew words and seen that PSA doesn't agree with the definitions of those words. In fact, PSA must radically redefine "forgiveness" in order to even have a chance of being true. However, God chose to inspire those words. He could've inspired different words, but He chose not to. Thus, if we want to honor God's choice of words in scripture, we seem bound to accept what God wrote.

That leads to a problem for PSA:

God inspired the Greek and Hebrew words that mean "forgive" to describe Himself and how He behaves.

However, PSA must change the definitions of those words in order to support its assertion that God cannot forgive.

That means that for PSA to be true, it must redefine (i.e. "change") the words of scripture!

or at least that's what it looks like to me.

I don't see a way around that.

Now, I could be wrong. It's entirely possible that PSA has a very strong case in other passages that we haven't looked at yet, which is why this PSA series is shifting focus slightly and looking at the strongest passages used to support PSA. We arguably hit the strongest one in this article and we'll look at what's probably considered the strongest by most PSA believing Christians in the next article: Isaiah 53.

That article will be a thorough, verse-by-verse study of the end of Isaiah 52 through the end of Isaiah 53.

I've been looking forward to that for 6-8 months now, and it's finally time! Obviously, it'll probably take a while to write, but close examination in a verse-by-verse study takes time to do correctly.

Conclusion

The definition of the Greek words translated forgive/forgiveness, and also (*potentially*) *justification* • run directly contrary to what PSA needs them to be. **This means that PSA appears to be ignoring the definitions of the words on which it claims to be based. That weakens PSA's case dramatically at the very least.** (At the worst, such redefinitions could be considered changing the words of God in scripture to suit a theological bias, though I don't think most PSA believing Christians do it on purpose.)

Luke 4:18 clearly means *liberation*•, not *forgiveness*, which is important because Jesus states the reason He came in that verse. Both Mark 3:19 and Hebrews 9:22 are about forgiveness, but not very applicable. Acts 13:38 references the *promise made to the fathers*• about bodily resurrection. Contextually, especially including Romans 6, the odds are high that it's about being freed from sin, not being forgiven for sin.

Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14 both tie *redemption*• to the *aphesis*• of sins. Since there's a *day of redemption*•, and since Romans 8 ties *redemption*• to the *adoption as sons*, and the hope of our salvation, it seems like near conclusive proof that forgiveness isn't in view in the *aphesis of sins*• verses. Plus, Hebrews 9 talks of the redemption (*liberation from captivity or slavery at a cost*)

Luke 1:77 repeatedly mentions both salvation and redemption and connects both with being rescued from our enemies. Since God isn't our enemy, this doesn't seem like it could be a reference to PSA. However, it aligns well with Luke 4:18's use of *aphesis*• to mean *liberation*•.

We looked at the *for the forgiveness of sins*• verses that add some clarity (*Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3, Matthew 26:28, and Acts 2:38*) and saw that if they have a consistent meaning, then it seems less likely to support PSA because John's baptism couldn't forgive sins according to PSA. However, *liberation from sin*• appears to work well in all those passages.

Luke 24:47, Acts 5:31, Acts 10:43, and Acts 26:18 didn't have enough context around them to give a clear indication either way.

Taking all of these into account, it seems like *liberation*• is the nuance of the word intended when salvation is in view! but the PSA translation is still valid. It creates its own set of problems, but it's valid.

Conversely, the strongest argument against PSA *even in English* appears to be the repeated use of the words forgive, forgiveness, and pardon to describe how God behaves toward us. PSA says that God is unable to forgive in the normal, everyday sense of the English, Greek, and Hebrew words. **While going against English isn't problematic, PSA must redefine the Greek and Hebrew words to mean something completely opposite to their lexical definition in order to exist.**

(And as an aside that we've covered before, PSA seems to have a habit of such redefinitions. For example, *atonement*• stopped being *reconciliation*• and became *appeasement*•, and something similar happened to *propitiation*• as well.)

The next article in this series will be a verse-by-verse trip through the latter part of Isaiah 52 and then the whole of Isaiah 53. Many PSA adherents consider this to be the strongest pro-PSA passage in the Bible, so weâ??ll examine it to see if theyâ??re correct.

Iâ??ll see you then.

EDIT: Hereâ??s the link to [the verse-by-verse study of Isaiah 53](#).

God Bless,

Berean Patriot