

## PSA Examined

### Article Series:

Article #10:  
What are  
Ransom &  
Redemption?



PSA Series — What Do “Ransom” and “Redemption” Mean in the Bible? Do They Support PSA?

### Description

## PSA Examined

### Article Series:

Article #10:  
What are  
Ransom &  
Redemption?



The most relevant Bible verse about ransom for this [series](#)

[on PSA](#) is also probably the most famous one on the topic:

### Matthew 20:25-28

**25** But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them. **26** “It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, **27** and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; **28** just as **the Son of Man** did not come to be served, but to serve, and **to give His life a ransom for many.**”

Ironically, the conclusion of this article will be theologically neutral when it comes to PSA and how Jesus saves us in general. **Unlike many of the other words we’ve looked at, both ransom and redemption can truly fit into any theory about how Jesus saved us.** Because of that, I’ll put a summary up front and then you can wade into the weeds of word definitions if you would like. I would recommend you do, but that’s obviously up to you.

We'll move to application after the "weeds", so I suggest you at least read the TL;DR and what follows it.

## The "TL;DR" (*Too long; didn't read*) Summary:

All of the Greek and Hebrew words that are translated ransom or redemption effectively boil down to a core meaning: "to rescue or liberate something or someone, sometimes — but not always — by paying a price".

If you look at how God "ransomed" Israel from Egypt, He didn't actually "pay" anyone anything. Instead, He rescued them "with an outstretched arm and great judgements". This is like how when a soldier dies, he's said to "pay the ultimate price". Jesus paid our ransom by "paying the ultimate price" (*dying*) in order to rescue and free us. The "ransom" that Jesus speaks of isn't a literal transfer of wealth or anything else of value, but rather metaphorical, again like a soldier "paying the ultimate price" when he dies.

Okay, that's the end of the summary.

You can keep reading to get into the weeds of word definitions, **OR** you can [click here](#) to jump to near the end of the article where we'll look at what Jesus rescued/liberated us from. Fair warning, if you keep reading, there will be weeds... lots of weeds.

## The Old Testament's use of ransom and redemption

Before we look at the New Testament words and usage, we'll look at the Old Testament first. Too many people don't realize that the New Testament is like the last third of a good story, while the Old Testament contains the context and background needed to fully appreciate the final third. Because context is important, and especially here, we'll grab that context first.

### Hebrew "?????" (ga'al)

Here's the definition of "?????" ([ga'al](#)) copy/pasted from a lexicon:

**Definition:** Redeem, *act as kinsman-redeemer*, avenge, ransom, *deliver*

**Meaning:** to be the next of kin

**Word Origin:** A primitive root

**Corresponding Greek / Hebrew Entries:** – G3084 (?????, lutroo): To redeem, to ransom

– G629 (????????????, apolutrosis): Redemption, *deliverance*

**Usage:** The Hebrew verb “gaal” primarily means to redeem or act as a kinsman-redeemer. It involves the idea of buying back or reclaiming something or someone, often in the context of familial duty. This term is used to describe the act of a close relative who restores the rights of another and avenges their wrongs. It encompasses both legal and relational aspects, emphasizing the responsibility and privilege of kinship.

**Cultural and Historical Background:** In ancient Israelite society, the concept of the kinsman-redeemer was integral to maintaining family integrity and property within the clan. The kinsman-redeemer had the duty to redeem a relative who had sold themselves into slavery, to buy back family land that had been sold, and to marry a widow to preserve the family line (as seen in the account of Ruth and Boaz). This role was not only a legal obligation but also a moral and social one, reflecting the communal and covenantal nature of Israelite life.

And then from Thayer’s, though just the short definitions for space reasons, and because that’s all we’ll need for this word.

**1 act as kinsman, do the part of next of kin** (chiefly in D H P Ruth), ?????? kinsman  
Leviticus 25:25 (H) Numbers 5:8; Numbers 35:12 (P) Ruth 2:20; Ruth 3:9,12; Ruth 4:1,3,6,8,14; 1 Kings 16:11.

**2 redeem, by payment of value assessed**, of consecrated things, by the original owner  
Leviticus 27:13,15,19,20,31 (P).

**3 redeem**, with God as subject implying personal relationship, chiefly in poetry

Now, there’s another nuance that will become clear as you see how it’s used, and that nuance is of “rescue”. Our English word “redeem” is often used in a financial sense, like “redeeming a coupon”. However, biblical usage of this word always seems to carry this idea of “rescue” in how it’s used, even when the financial aspect of payment is there. Now, many of the examples of usage that include “rescue” can fit under the idea of “behave like a kinsmen”, but some don’t.

This is probably the best example of a verse that doesn’t have the nuance of “behave like a kinsman”:

### Leviticus 27:30-31

**30** ‘Thus all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, belongs to Yahweh; it is holy to Yahweh. **31** If, therefore, a man wishes to redeem (ga’al) part of his tithe, he shall add to it one-fifth of it.

You can’t really consider your tithe as part of the family, so you can’t act as a kinsman to it. As you’ll soon see, the idea of rescuing your kin is one of the primary usages of “ga’al”, so it’s entirely possible that it came to mean “rescue” in general.

**Notice too the financial component.**

It often seems to include the financial component, but definitely not always.

### Leviticus 25:25-27 (LSB)

**25** 'If a brother of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his possession of *land*, then his nearest kinsman **redeemer (ga'al)** is to come and **redeem (ga'al)** what his brother has sold. **26** Or in case a man has no kinsman **redeemer (ga'al)**, but recovers his means and finds sufficient *payment* for its **redemption, (gullah, the noun form)** **27** then he shall calculate the years since its sale and return the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and so return to his possession of *land*.

Notice the close association of the word with "kinsman", which can also accurately be translated "relative", as below. Again, here's another use where the financial aspect isn't far away.

### Numbers 5:5-8

**5** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **6** "Speak to the sons of Israel, 'When a man or woman commits any of the sins of mankind, acting unfaithfully against the LORD, and that person is guilty, **7** then he shall confess his sins which he has committed, and he shall make restitution in full for his wrong and add to it one-fifth of it, and give *it* to him whom he has wronged. **8** But if the man has no **relative (ga'al)** to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution which is made for the wrong must go to the LORD for the priest, besides the ram of atonement, by which atonement is made for him.

However, there are places where the financial aspect is totally absent and the idea of "rescue" takes center stage. For example:

**Genesis 48:16** (*Jacob speaking*) The angel who has **redeemed (ga'al)** me from all evil, Bless the lads; And may my name live on in them, And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

**Exodus 6:6** "Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also **redeem (ga'al)** you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

**Exodus 15:13** "In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom You have **redeemed; (ga'al)** In Your strength You have guided them to Your holy habitation.

Notice that the financial side is completely absent. The two verses in Exodus are referring to the Exodus, and God definitely didn't pay anyone to release Israel from Egypt. In fact, if you read the story you'll see that the Egyptians gave tons of valuable stuff to the Israelites as they were departing.

Thus, importantly, “ga’al” *can* include the three ideas of payment, rescue, or “acting like a kinsman”; however, it doesn’t always contain all three ideas. Often it’s only one or two of them.

Two more passages quickly, then we’ll get to it’s “main” use:

### Numbers 35:16-21

16 ‘But if he struck him down with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 17 And if he struck him down with a stone in the hand, by which he would die, and *as a result* he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 18 Or if he struck him with a wooden object in the hand, by which he would die, and *as a result* he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 19 The blood **avenger (ga’al)** himself shall put the murderer to death; he shall put him to death when he meets him. 20 And if he pushed him of hatred or threw something at him lying in wait and *as a result* he died, 21 or if he struck him down with his hand in enmity, and *as a result* he died, the one who struck him shall surely be put to death; he is a murderer; the blood **avenger (ga’al)** shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

*(Importantly, this was for intentional murder; accidental homicide was handled differently)*

Here, “acting like a kinsman” means bringing those who murdered your kin to justice. Notice the phrase “blood avenger”, which I personally think is better understood as “blood relative”. That fits the nuance better and specifies that you must be blood related to the victim to perform this function.

Changing passages, the meanings of “rescue” and “act like a kinsman” meet perfectly in the story of **Ruth**. For context, the Ruth quote we’ll look at in a moment is referring to levirate marriage, described in Deuteronomy 25:5, which is immediately below:

### Deuteronomy 25:5-6

5 “When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be *married outside the family* to a strange man. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. “It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

That’s the context, now, here’s the passage in Ruth.

### Ruth 3:9-13 (LSB)

9 And he said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth your maidservant. So spread your wing over your maidservant, for you are a *kinsman redeemer.*” (ga’al) 10 Then he said, “May you be blessed of Yahweh, my daughter. You have shown your last lovingkindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 So now, my daughter, do not fear. All that you say, I will do for you; for all my people within the gates of the city

know that you are a woman of excellence. **12** But now it is true I am a *kinsman redeemer* (ga'al); however, there is a *kinsman redeemer* (ga'al) closer than I. **13** Stay this night, and it will be in the morning that, if he will *redeem* (ga'al) you, good; let him *redeem* (ga'al) you. But if he does not desire to *redeem* (ga'al) you, then I will *redeem* (ga'al) you, as Yahweh lives. Lie down until morning."

The word also shows up a lot in chapter 4 when Boaz convinces the closer relative to let him marry Ruth. The idea of payment is entirely absent, while the idea of "act like a kinsman" is literally the point. Additionally, there's a nuance of rescue as well since Ruth was quite poor and vulnerable in that time and culture.

Moving on.

**Now, arguably the most common usage in the Psalms and Prophets are like the two verses below:**

**Isaiah 44:24:** Thus says the LORD, your *Redeemer, (ga'al)* and the one who formed you from the womb, "I, the LORD, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself And spreading out the earth all alone,

**Isaiah 52:3** For thus says the LORD, "You were sold for nothing and you will be *redeemed* (ga'al) without money."

There are many, many other uses like this, and you can see all of them [here](#), but mostly they are like the two above. *The most common use is (1) God saying that He is Israel's redeemer, or (2) God saying that He will redeem Israel.* Notably, the idea of payment is usually entirely absent in those two uses. It's often not present, but the context usually doesn't rule it out either.

**There's something important to notice: being a "redeemer" means to "act like a kinsman".**

That's important.

God is our heavenly Father.

*In a metaphorical sense, that makes God our kinsman. (Father)*

God could've chosen another word to describe Himself and how He relates to us, but He didn't. In fact, as you'll see in a moment, there's another Hebrew word that contains the idea of rescue and payment but without the connotation of "act like a kinsman". Despite that, God chose a word that primarily means to "act like a kinsman" to describe Him saving/rescuing His people.

**That means something.**

It seems important.

I won't draw any new doctrine from this of course, but it does reinforce yet again that God is our Father, our kinsman. *(And in the New Testament, Jesus is sometimes pictured as our brother.)* As such, He "acts as a kinsman should". He rescues His people, He provides for them, and He pays the (*metaphorical*

) price for our freedom. This status of being in God's family is purely by His mercy and grace, so it's not like we can earn it.

He's good that way. ?

Further, the New Testament calls us all "brothers", making us kinsmen of each other. That should affect how we treat each other.

Now, we'll look at the next word.

## Hebrew "?????" (padah)

Here's the second of the three Hebrew words.

**Definition:** To redeem, ransom, rescue

**Meaning:** to sever, ransom, gener, to release, preserve

**Word Origin:** A primitive root

**Corresponding Greek / Hebrew Entries:** – **G3084 (?????, lutro?):** To release on receipt of ransom, to redeem

– **G629 (????????????, apolytr?sis):** Redemption, deliverance

**Usage:** The Hebrew verb "padah" primarily means to redeem or ransom. It conveys the idea of delivering or rescuing someone or something from a state of bondage or danger, often through the payment of a price. In the Old Testament, "padah" is frequently used in the context of God's deliverance of His people, whether from physical captivity or spiritual bondage.

**Cultural and Historical Background:** In ancient Israel, the concept of redemption was deeply embedded in the social and religious fabric. Redemption often involved a kinsman-redeemer (go'el) who had the responsibility to redeem a relative in distress, whether by buying back land, freeing them from slavery, or avenging blood. This cultural practice is reflected in the broader theological theme of God's redemptive work for Israel, particularly in the Exodus narrative where God redeems His people from slavery in Egypt.

**As a slight spoiler, basically everything we said about "ga'al" can be said about "padah", except that "padah" doesn't contain the idea of "act like a kinsman".**

Fundamentally, that's the largest difference between "ga'al" and "padah". Here's a typical passage in the law, and virtually all the uses in the law have this connotation of "buying something back" with money.

**Numbers 18:15-16**

**15** “Every first issue of the womb of all flesh, whether man or animal, which they offer to the LORD, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely **redeem, (padah)** and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall **redeem. (padah)** **16** “As to their **redemption price, (padah)** from a month old you shall **redeem (padah)** them, by your valuation, five shekels in silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.

However, outside the law, it doesn't always have that connotation. In fact, it usually doesn't have the connotation of payment outside the law.

For context for the following verse, King Saul said that anyone who ate food before victory was achieved would be put to death. (*Yeah, that's really smart; don't let your soldiers eat before battle, but I digress...*) Saul's son Jonathan didn't hear of this and ate before victory was achieved. This verse is right after King Saul finds out:

**1 Samuel 14:45**

**45** But the people said to Saul, “Must Jonathan die, who has brought about this great deliverance in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day.” So the people **rescued (padah)** Jonathan and he did not die.

**Virtually every use outside the law is like this, with “padah” used to mean “to rescue”; sometimes with money, but often not with money.**

For example:

**2 Samuel 7:23**

“And what one nation on the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went **to redeem (padah)** for Himself as a people and to make a name for Himself, and to do a great thing for You and awesome things for Your land, before Your people whom You have **redeemed (padah)** for Yourself from Egypt, from nations and their gods?

Here's another example from Psalms:

**Psalms 78:40-42**

**40** How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness  
And grieved Him in the desert!

**41** Again and again they tempted God,  
And pained the Holy One of Israel.

**42** They did not remember His power,  
The day when He **redeemed (padah)** them from the adversary,

**43** When He performed His signs in Egypt  
And His marvels in the field of Zoan,

And pertinent to our topic of PSA:

### **Psalm 49:15**

But God will **redeem (padah)** my soul from the power of Sheol, For He will receive me.  
Selah.

If you remember from the article on death, “Sheol” is roughly equivalent to Hades. Both are simply the place of the dead, and both the righteous and wicked are said to go to Sheol because, again, it’s simply the place of the dead. It’s like saying “the underworld” or perhaps “he’s six feet under”.

**I could quote many more examples, but they’re all roughly in line with the above uses.**

You can also look at the other forms of the word [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), but they basically mean the same thing (*redemption/deliverance*).

### **Where “ga’al” and “padah” overlap**

Now, there are 4 passages where “ga’al” and “padah” are used in close proximity, and the usage there sheds light on their overlap of meaning.

### **Isaiah 51:10-11**

**10** Was it not You who dried up the sea,  
The waters of the great deep;  
Who made the depths of the sea a pathway  
For the **redeemed (ga’al)** to cross over?

**11** So the **ransomed (padah)** of the LORD will return  
And come with joyful shouting to Zion,  
And everlasting joy *will be* on their heads.  
They will obtain gladness and joy,  
And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

**Jeremiah 31:11**

11 For the LORD has **ransomed (padah)** Jacob And **redeemed (ga'al)** him from the hand of him who was stronger than he.

**Hosea 13:14**

14 Shall I **ransom (padah)** them from the power of Sheol? Shall I **redeem (ga'al)** them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.

**Psalms 69:18**

18 Oh draw near to my soul and **redeem (ga'al)** it; **Ransom (padah)** me because of my enemies!

**The overlap is almost entirely the nuance of rescue/deliver.**

Payment doesn't have much of a focus, and arguably is excluded by the context.

*(Random side note: it's amazing how often my articles are word studies + careful reading + cultural context = meaning.)*

Next, we'll look at the last Hebrew word, though it'll just take a moment.

**Hebrew "?????" (Kopher)**

If this sounds familiar, that's because it's a homonym of the noun form of "kaphar", which means either "atone" or "cleanse/purge" depending on context; homonyms again. Anyway, [here's the entry](#):

**Definition:** **Ransom, Atonement, Price of a Life, Bribe**

**Meaning:** a cover, a village, bitumen, the henna plant, **a redemption-price**

**Word Origin:** Derived from the root verb ?????? (kaphar), which means "to cover" or "to atone."

**Corresponding Greek / Hebrew Entries:** The concept of "kopher" can be related to the Greek word ?????? (lutron), Strong's Greek 3083, which also means "ransom" or "price of redemption."

**Usage:** The Hebrew word “kopher” primarily refers to a ransom or price paid for the redemption of a life. It is often associated with the concept of atonement, where a substitute is offered to cover or make amends for sin. In some contexts, it can also refer to a bribe or a gift given to appease someone.

A typical usage would be like the following verses:

### Numbers 35:31

31 ‘Moreover, you shall not take ransom (kopher) for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death.

### Exodus 30:12

“When you take a census of the sons of Israel to number them, then each one of them shall give a ransom (kopher) for himself to the LORD, when you number them, so that there will be no plague among them when you number them.

Notably, it virtually always seems to involve payment. However, this term isn’t used of God ransoming Israel, so it’s not very applicable to this article. If you like, you can see every place it’s used [here](#).

Now we’ll move on to the New Testament words.

## The New Testament’s use of ransom and redemption

There are basically two words that are used in the New Testament for this, or rather, perhaps I should say “word families”. We have these “word families” in English as well, for example,

- “a punch” – a noun, describing the action of hitting someone with a closed fist
- “He punched” – a verb used to indicate the action of punching
- “punchy” – an adjective describing another word (a “short and punchy joke”)
- etc.

Greek does the same thing, so for the sake of space we’ll just look at the noun form unless the other forms are relevant.

### The “??????” (lutron) “word family”

Probably the most famous verse with this word is the one we started the article with.

**Matthew 20:28**

28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a **ransom** for many.”

The Greek word used there is “???????” ([lutron](#)), and here’s what it means:

**Definition:** Ransom, Redemption Price

**Meaning:** **the purchasing money for manumitting slaves**, a ransom, the price of ransoming; especially the sacrifice by which expiation is effected, an offering of expiation.

**Word Origin:** Derived from the Greek verb ??? (lu?), meaning “to loosen” or “to release.”

**Corresponding Greek / Hebrew Entries:** The concept of ransom in the Old Testament is often associated with the Hebrew word ?????? (kopher), which refers to a covering or atonement price, as seen in passages like Exodus 30:12 and Psalm 49:7.

**Usage:** **In the New Testament, “lutron” refers to the price paid to release someone from bondage or captivity.** It is often used metaphorically to describe the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ as the means by which humanity is redeemed from sin and its consequences.

**Cultural and Historical Background:** In the ancient Greco-Roman world, **“lutron” was commonly used in the context of freeing slaves or prisoners of war. A ransom was paid to secure their release, symbolizing liberation and a new beginning.** This concept was familiar to the original audience of the New Testament, providing a powerful metaphor for the spiritual liberation offered through Christ.

Notice the focus of the Greek word: **payment to release captives or slaves.**

**Now, the other words in this word family all fundamentally mean the same thing, with only very slight differences in nuance.** Because of that, I’ll list them below and then link to the lexical pages if you want to do more looking on your own.

- “???????” ([lutron](#), used in Matthew 20:28 above, you can see every place it’s used [here](#).)
- “???????” ([lutróo](#), you can see every place it’s used [here](#).)
- “?????????” ([lutrósís](#), you can see every place it’s used [here](#).)
- “?????????” ([lutrótés](#), you can see every place it’s used [here](#).)

Moving on to the other words used.

### The “?????????????” ([apolutrósís](#)), “word family”

The next word is “?????????????” ([apolutrósís](#), you can see every place it’s used [here](#)), and it means:

**Usage:** The term “apolutrósis” primarily refers to the act of redeeming or the state of being redeemed. In the New Testament, it is used to describe the deliverance from sin and its consequences through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. It conveys the idea of liberation or release, often with the implication of a ransom being paid.

**Context:** ?????????? is a significant theological term in the New Testament, encapsulating the essence of the Christian doctrine of salvation. It is used to describe the redemptive work accomplished by Jesus Christ through His sacrificial death and resurrection. This redemption is not merely a release from physical captivity but a profound spiritual liberation from the bondage of sin and death.

And from another source:

629 apolýtr?sis(from 575 /apó, “from” and 3084 /lytró?, “redeem”) – properly, redemption – literally, “buying back from, re-purchasing (winning back) what was previously forfeited (lost).”

There’s the additional nuance of recovering something that originally belonged to you, but otherwise it’s extremely similar to the previous word.

The only other word in this word family is “???????” ([apoluó](#), you can see every place it’s used [here](#)), and since it has a slightly different nuance I’ll copy/paste the usage for this one as well.

**Usage:** The verb ?????? (apoluó) is used in the New Testament to convey the act of releasing or setting someone or something free. It can refer to the physical release of a person from captivity or bondage, the dismissal of a crowd or gathering, or the act of divorce in a marital context. The term is often used in the context of Jesus releasing individuals from physical or spiritual bondage, as well as in legal or social settings where individuals are sent away or dismissed.

Again, very similar.

### The word “?????????” (exagorazó)

The last word is “?????????” ([exagorazó](#), you can see every place it’s used [here](#)), and here’s the copy/paste from the lexicon about usage:

**Usage:** The verb “exagorazó” primarily means to redeem or buy back, often with the connotation of freeing from bondage or captivity. In the New Testament, it is used metaphorically to describe Christ’s redemptive work in freeing believers from the curse of the law and sin. It also conveys the idea of making the most of an opportunity, particularly in the context of time.

Again, it means almost exactly the same as the previous words we’ve looked at. By now, you’re probably noticing a theme...

## Greek words summary

As you can see, all of the Greek words that are translated “redeem”, “redemption”, “ransom”, etc. have a similar meaning: liberation at a cost. Because of that, we’ll treat them like they are a homogeneous group in this article series.

They do have differences of nuance of course, but those differences aren’t very relevant to this series and it would take a lot of space to unpack them while providing almost no benefit. Trust me, I’ve been down that road; it took a lot of time and there isn’t much more to it than what’s above. Tiny nuance differences, but little else. If you want to get further into the weeds on these words, enjoy! The links above are there for that.

For everyone else, we’ll move on now that we have a solid understanding of ransom and redemption.

## To whom was the Ransom paid? Was it paid to anyone at all?

The answer to this question will become a lot clearer when we examine what the payment was. Thankfully, scripture does tell us.

### 1 Peter 1:17-19

17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ*.

And more concisely:

### Acts 20:28

28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made

you overseers, **to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.**

The “payment” was Jesus’s blood. **That begs the question: who was the payment to? Was it to anyone at all?** Thankfully, I think scripture gives us something to go on here because Jesus is described as our Passover lamb.

### **1 Corinthians 5:7 (LSB)**

**7** Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. **For Christ, our Passover lamb, also was sacrificed.**

Passover is of course when the Israelites left Egypt, and that is also called a “ransom” repeatedly. Here are just three of the many, many examples

### **Micah 6:4**

“Indeed, **I brought you up from the land of Egypt And ransomed (padah) you from the house of slavery,** And I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam.

### **2 Samuel 7:23**

“And what one nation on the earth is like Your people Israel, whom **God went to redeem (padah) for Himself** as a people and to make a name for Himself, and to do a great thing for You and awesome things for Your land, before **Your people whom You have redeemed (padah) for Yourself from Egypt, from nations and their gods?**

### **Exodus 6:6 (NKJV, since the NASB has “rescue”)**

Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and **I will bring you out from under the labors of the Egyptians,** and I will rescue you from their bondage. **I will also redeem (ga’al) you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments.**

I could post many more examples, but these are clear so this will suffice for now. Thus, it seems clear that God “ransomed” Israel from Egypt. That begs the question:

**When God “ransomed” Israel from Egypt, what price did He pay and to whom did He pay it?**

**Exactly.**

Scripture tells us in Exodus 6:6, quoted above: “I will also redeem (ga’al) you **with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments.**” Now, does an outstretched arm and great judgements sound like anything of value (*like money or goods*) changed hands to you?

Me either.

*(And yes, I'm aware that some people, like Mike Winger, think that the Passover lamb was a penal substitutionary sacrifice. We'll examine that idea in the next article.)*

**Thus, despite no money or item(s) of value changing hands, God “ransomed” Israel from Egypt.**

That's important.

Jesus is called our Passover lamb, and that connection means we can look at the Exodus from Egypt to help us understand what Jesus meant when he said he would give His life as a “ransom” for many. In Exodus, no money or items of value changed hands despite it being called a “ransom”. **Thus, it would also make sense if no money or items of value changed hands despite Jesus's sacrifice being called a “ransom”.** Perhaps that's not certain, but there's certainly precedent for it and God seemingly loves to make history rhyme.

**We sometimes use similar concepts in our English sayings.** For example, there's a famous quote that reads:

“The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.”

**There's no literal “price” being paid there.** It's figurative language meaning that we must remain vigilant if we want to remain free. **Likewise, if a soldier gives his life to accomplish a mission, we say that “he paid the ultimate price”.** Again, no money or items of value changed hands, and yet the man was still said to pay a price. **Figuratively, it simply means that He died to accomplish the mission he was sent on...**

...does that sound familiar?

I think I read something like that in the Bible somewhere, but where? ?

Now, this idea of ransom being an actual, literal price of some kind that was paid by Jesus to someone or something was actually a debate in the early church. However, I'll summarize without quotes because I'm only mentioning this for completeness. Some thought that the ransom was literal and paid to God, others thought it was paid to Satan, and some thought it was paid to death itself somehow. Those would all seem to be wrong and an overly literal understanding of the “ransom” passages.

**Like a soldier is said to “pay the ultimate price” when he dies to accomplish his mission, so also, Jesus is said to pay a price (a “ransom”) because He died to accomplish His mission.**

As we just saw above, scripture clearly records that God “redeems” without money, meaning He “pays the ransom” without actually paying anyone anything. God even explicitly says that He’ll do this:

### Isaiah 52:3

For thus says the LORD, “**You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed (ga’al) without money.**”

The connection gets even clearer when you realize that this verse comes from Isaiah 52, which sets up Isaiah 53, one of the most famous messianic passages — possibly the most famous passage — in the Old Testament. Just a few verses later, we get this:

### Isaiah 52:7

**7 How lovely on the mountains  
Are the feet of him who brings good news,  
Who announces peace  
And brings good news of happiness,  
Who announces salvation,  
And says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”**

This is quoted by Paul in connection to the gospel as well.

### Romans 10:8-15

**8** But what does it say? “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, **9** that **if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;** **10** for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. **11** For the Scripture says, “WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.” **12** For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; **13** for “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”

**14** How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? **15** How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, **“HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!”**

**Putting that all together** — Isaiah 52’s mention of “ransom without money”, Isaiah 52 setting up Isaiah 53, and Paul’s quotation of Isaiah 52 in connection to the gospel — **it seems entirely reasonable to think that Jesus ransomed/redeemed us without money/payment to anyone.**

**The price he paid was His blood, His death, but that price was not paid to anyone.**

Like a soldier who “pays the ultimate price” when he gives his life to accomplish his mission, so also, Jesus “paid our ransom” by dying to accomplish His mission. This is the precedent set by the exodus from Egypt which was also without a price paid to anyone, and since Jesus is our “Passover lamb”, that seems like a good place to draw precedent. Additionally, Isaiah 52’s statements about redemption without money in connection to Isaiah 53, and Paul’s use of Isaiah 52 would seem to make this even more clear.

**Thus, the “ransom” that Jesus paid was His death (*His shed blood*) since it was the metaphorical “price” necessary to save us, and it was not paid to anyone.**

This seems like the clear teaching of scripture, and again, we use expressions like this now. There’s the “he paid the ultimate price” saying, but there are also others. For example, the “price of freedom” quote above. A bit less common, but “I paid for this with blood, sweat, and tears” is often used to indicate that a man has earned something through hard work rather than paying any particular price to anyone.

Somewhat importantly, this is almost entirely theologically neutral...

...almost.

There’s one verse that makes it not support one specific subset of one specific theory, which we’ll look at now.

## The “day of redemption”

Scripture records that our “redemption” happens on a specific single day.

### Ephesians 4:30

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

Thus, we know that redemption happens on a specific day.

This is a problem for PSA **if** — and only if — a PSA adherent wants to say that “redemption” is related to God forgiving our sins, unless a PSA adherent wants to say that our sins aren’t forgiven now, but rather will only be forgiven at the final judgement.

Now, there are verses which seem to indicate this, like Ephesians 1:7 & Colossians 1:14, which we'll cover in detail in the next article. Now, if a PSA adherent wants to say that redemption refers to something other than the forgiveness of sins, there's no problem. Many do indeed take that view, for example, CARM: (*The "Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry"*.)

The "Day of Redemption" is a reference to the future time when the Christians receive their resurrected bodies. The term comes from Paul's words to the Ephesians:

*(BP note: He then quotes Eph 4:30)*

[Source](#).

We covered that day (*when we get glorified bodies*) in some detail in the previous article, so there's no need to rehash it here. **There appears to be relatively broad support for the idea that the "day of redemption" refers to the day when we get glorified bodies.** Because of that, I won't spend any time building the case. The CARM link above does build the case in short form with lots of scripture, so you can go there if you'd like to see it.

Unless you're a PSA adherent who holds to "redemption = forgiveness", then "redemption" as the idea of "*liberation from slavery or captivity at a cost*" fits perfectly into every single understanding of how Jesus saves us, and I don't think there's a single exception. The "Ransom Theory" claims it more than the rest, but it truly does fit neatly into all of them.

Now that we know what the price was and how it was "paid", we also need to look at who was freed and what they were freed from. (*Which yes, I've partially spoiled in this section, but only partially; there's more to it.*)

We'll do that now.

## Who was freed, and from what?

We've already covered that the "payment" was metaphorical, so the next obvious questions are:

1. Who are the captives or slaves that were freed?
2. Is it referring to captives or slaves? Or both?
3. What are the captives or slaves released from?

I think the answer to the first question is obvious: it's us. It's all of us, all of mankind. This seems so self-evident based on the verses we've seen that I won't cite them again. (*If someone disagrees, please post a comment and I'll make the argument.*)

Now, the answer to the other two questions aren't quite as obvious, but thankfully scripture is clear on this point.

**1 Peter 1:17-19**

**17** If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*; **18** **knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,** **19** but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ.

Okay, so our “futile way of life inherited from your forefathers” is one element. That’s assuredly a sinful life, as Romans makes clear:

**Romans 6:16-18**

**16** Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, **you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?** **17** But thanks be to God that **though you were slaves of sin,** you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, **18** and **having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.**

Okay, so we were “slaves of sin”, so that “futile way of life” seems to clearly be a sinful way of life. That makes perfect sense and it’s repeated in many places, but there’s yet one more thing:

**2 Timothy 2:24-26**

**24** The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, **25** with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps **God may grant them repentance** leading to the knowledge of the truth, **26** and **they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil,** having been held **captive** by him to do his will.

Now, this idea that we were held captive by Satan is actually reinforced in many other places, but we won’t look at them just yet. That’ll be the next article. That said, the verses above make two things perfectly clear:

**Before becoming believers, we were slaves of sin who were held captive by the devil to do his (the devil’s) will.**

This is the clear teaching of scripture.

It’s explicitly stated.

So were we captives or slaves? Both. We were slaves to sin and held captive by the devil.

Now, Jesus did indeed free us from both of them.

**However, in order to truly appreciate how incredible it was that Jesus freed us from the devil/the powers of darkness, we need to understand just how bad the problem is.**

It's worse than I ever imagined.

I had no idea just how bad it was before I started this research project into PSA. Just like I didn't know how crucial Jesus's blood was to us living in incorruptible bodies on the new earth, or how we needed that to be in God's presence, I was also shocked at just how serious the problem was, and still is for unbelievers. Paul alludes to this in Ephesians:

### **Ephesians 6:10-12**

**10** Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. **11** Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. **12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Thus, we'll spend a fair bit of time to understand the problem in the next article. We would do it in this article, but the next one will be extremely long because there's so much ground to cover. On the bright side, it'll satisfy those who've asked me to write something on spiritual warfare. ?

## **Conclusion**

As stated in the TL;DR at the beginning, ransom and redemption mean: "to rescue or liberate something or someone, sometimes — but not always — by paying a price". In the case of Jesus rescuing and liberating us, that price was His blood/death.

However, importantly, in the Exodus event, God is said to have "ransomed" his people even though He never paid a price to anyone. Since Jesus is our Passover lamb, that seems applicable to His death on the cross. Thus, just like during the exodus, Jesus didn't pay this price to anyone in particular. Instead, it was like when we say that a soldier "pays the ultimate price". The price wasn't paid to anyone or anything, it simply meant that it would cost Jesus something valuable (*His life*) in order to save us.

Notably, this is theologically neutral and doesn't appear to support any one theory about how Jesus saves us more than any other.

Before becoming believers, we were slaves to sin and held captive by the devil to do his will. This is what Jesus freed us from, but there's so much to it that it'll take a whole article to unpack it. That'll be the next article and I'll see you there.

EDIT: It's published, and you can find it [here](#).