

Mark 10:45

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

This verse articulates the heart of Christ's mission and the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. Jesus contrasts His purpose with worldly leadership—He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (ouk ēlthen diakonēthēnai alla diakonēsai, οὐκ ἤλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι). The verb diakonēsai (διακονῆσαι, "to serve") denotes menial service, even table-waiting—a shocking role for the Son of God. The climactic phrase "to give his life a ransom for many" (dounai tēn psychēn autou lytron anti pollōn, δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν) introduces the atonement's central metaphor. Lytron (λύτρον, "ransom") was the price paid to free slaves or prisoners. Anti (ἀντί, "for/instead of") indicates substitution—Christ's life in exchange for "the many." This fulfills Isaiah 53:11-12, where the Suffering Servant bears the sin of many. Reformed theology emphasizes that Christ's death was penal (bearing God's wrath), substitutionary (in our place), and particular ("for many," not all indiscriminately), accomplishing actual redemption, not merely potential salvation.

Historical Context

Jesus spoke these words during His final journey to Jerusalem (Mark 10:32-34), having just predicted His betrayal, crucifixion, and resurrection for the third time. James and John had requested positions of honor in Christ's kingdom (Mark 10:35-37), revealing they still expected a political Messiah who would overthrow Rome and establish Israel's supremacy. Jesus responded that greatness in His kingdom comes through servanthood, not dominion. The concept of ransom was

familiar in the ancient world—prisoners of war, kidnap victims, and slaves were ransomed. First-century Jews understood humanity's bondage to sin and anticipated messianic deliverance, but expected a warrior-king, not a suffering servant. Jesus redefined messianic expectations: He came first to suffer (Passion) before returning to reign (Parousia).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's example of servant-leadership challenge worldly ambition and the desire for recognition in your own life?
2. What does the substitutionary nature of Christ's ransom (His life in place of yours) reveal about the severity of sin and the depth of God's love?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	γὰρ	ό	υἱὸς	τοῦ	ἀνθρώπου	οὐκ	ῆλθεν
and	For	G3588	the Son	G3588	of man	not	came
G2532	G1063		G5207		G444	G3756	G2064

διακονῆσαι	ἀλλὰ	διακονῆσαι	καὶ	δοῦναι	τὴν
to be ministered unto	but	to be ministered unto	and	to give	G3588
G1247	G235	G1247	G2532	G1325	

ψυχὴν	αὐτοῦ	λύτρον	ἀντὶ	πολλῶν
life	G846	a ransom	for	many
G5590		G3083	G473	G4183

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 20:28 (Redemption): Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (Parallel theme): For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

John 13:14 (Parallel theme): If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

Titus 2:14 (Redemption): Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

John 10:15 (Parallel theme): As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Hebrews 5:8 (Parallel theme): Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

1 Peter 1:19 (Parallel theme): But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

2 Corinthians 5:21 (Parallel theme): For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Daniel 9:26 (Parallel theme): And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

Galatians 3:13 (Redemption): Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: