

Matthew 20:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Jesus presents Himself as the ultimate example: 'the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' This verse encapsulates the gospel—Christ's incarnation, servanthood, and substitutionary atonement. The word 'ransom' (Greek 'lutron'—redemption price) indicates payment securing freedom from slavery. Reformed soteriology sees here penal substitution: Christ's death pays the debt sinners owe, satisfying divine justice and liberating from sin's bondage. The 'many' refers to the elect, for whom Christ specifically died.

Historical Context

The 'ransom' concept came from slave markets where purchase price freed slaves. In Jewish thought, God 'ransomed' Israel from Egypt (Deuteronomy 7:8). Jesus declares His death as the ultimate ransom, freeing humanity from sin's slavery. This Passion prediction (the third in Matthew) comes shortly before Jesus enters Jerusalem for crucifixion week. The theological weight of 'ransom for many' is immense.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's example of servant leadership challenge your ministry approach?
2. What does it mean personally that Christ gave His life as ransom for you?
3. How should substitutionary atonement shape your understanding of leadership and service?

Interlinear Text

ὅσπερ ὁ νίὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἤλθεν
Even as the Son of man not came
G5618 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 a ransom for many
G5590 G846 G3083 G473 G4183

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 9:28 (Parallel theme): So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Luke 22:27 (Parallel theme): For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.

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.

1 Peter 3:18 (Parallel theme): For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

1 Timothy 2:6 (Redemption): Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Revelation 1:5 (Parallel theme): And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

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

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.

Ephesians 1:7 (Redemption): In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

Mark 14:24 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.