

Soteriology Part 1



Original Sin Atonement

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Original Sin
in the Orthodox Perspective



Before the Fall of Man

- It is written, ***“God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”*** (Gen 1:27).
- Adam and Eve were perfect and good (Gen 1:27); they had a ‘good’ human nature that was created ‘in the image of God’.



After the Fall of Man

- After the fall, this image was distorted; the moral human nature was wounded, weakened and damaged by sin.
- A predisposition [leaning towards] to sin invaded the human nature.
- It is written that Adam begot a son in his own likeness, after his image (Gen 5:3)

The Distorted Image

- In other words, Adam begot a son in his own **'distorted' image**.
- Therefore, St. Paul said, ***“we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others”*** (Ephesians 2:3).
- King David also said, ***“I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me”*** (Psalm 51:5)

The Sinful Human Nature

- The sinful human nature that we inherited is sentenced to death for ***“the wages of sin is death”*** (Romans 6:23).
- Thus death reigned over all humanity as St. Paul said, ***“Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned”*** (Romans 5:12), ***“by one man disobedience many were made sinners”*** (Romans 5:19).
- Indeed, ***“The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one”*** (Psalm 14:2-3)

The Result of the Fall

- In addition, the whole creation was also affected by the fall, God told Adam, **“Cursed is the ground for your sake”** (Genesis 3:17).
- God has given dominion of the world to Adam and due to Adam’s sin **“death entered the world”** (Romans 5:12).
- Even the **wild nature and cannibalism** in the animal kingdom is said to be due to the fall of Adam since all animals were created vegetarians (Genesis 1:29-30) (Adam & Eve, By H.H. Pope Shenouda III)

In a Nutshell

The sin of Adam led to:

- A corrupt human nature with a predisposition to sin.
- We inherited this corrupt nature and have fallen in sin.
- Death gained dominion over all of humanity as a result of the corrupt nature and sin.
- All creation suffers from the sin of Adam and ours.

Inheritance of Original Sin

- Therefore, what we inherit or what is transmitted to us is Adam's fallen human nature and not his actual sin.
- Moreover, we have our own sins to contend with because all of us have sinned and deserve punishment.

Redemption & Atonement

- Sin is an offense against God, King David said, ***“Against You, You only, have I sinned and done evil in Your sight”*** (Ps 51:4).
- This he said even though he sinned against **Uriah the Hittite** and **his wife Bathsheba**.
- The weight of that offense is **proportional** to the status of the offended party.
- Sin is, therefore, considered unlimited because it is committed against the **unlimited God**.
- Consequently, any sin requires **unlimited atonement**.

Who performs Atonement?

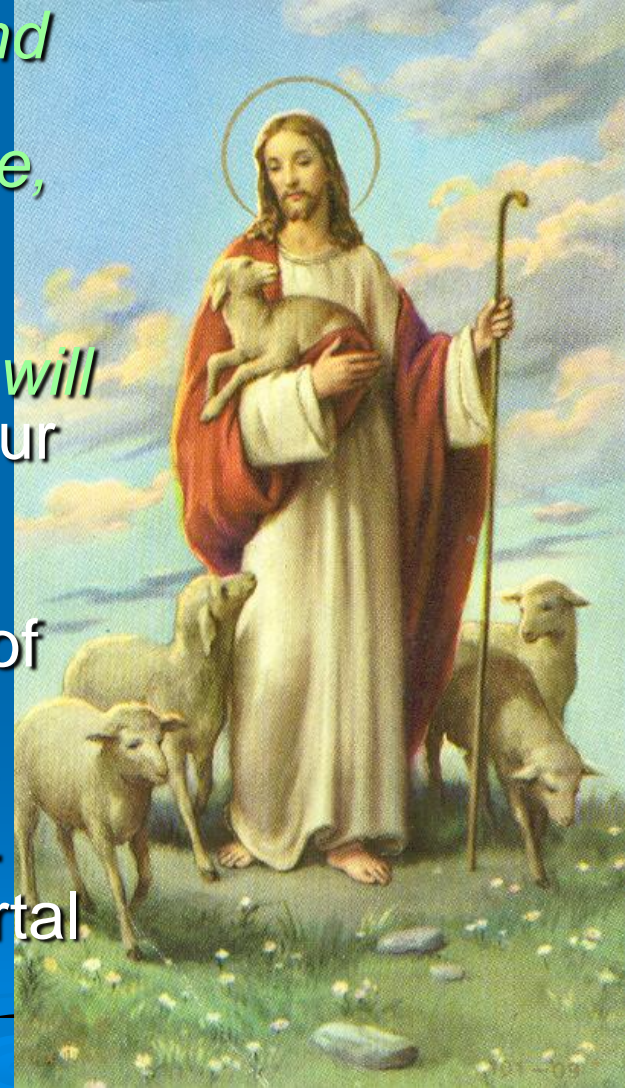
This atonement should be provided by a person who is:

- **Unlimited** → To be able to provide this unlimited atonement the Savior has to be unlimited.
- **Sinless** → The Savior has to be free from sin to be able to redeem others, or else he would need salvation himself.
- **Human** → Since human beings committed the sin, therefore, a human being should pay the price.
- **Mortal** → Since the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23), therefore, the savior has to be mortal.



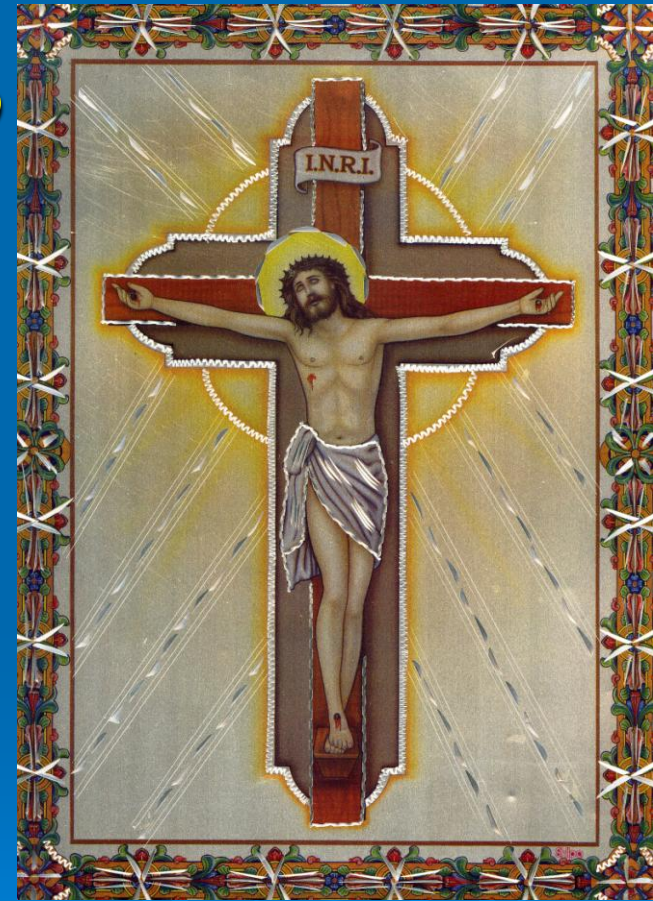
Our Lord Jesus Christ is

- **Unlimited** → He said, *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty”* (Revelations 1:8)
- **Sinless** → Archangel Gabriel said to the Virgin, *“That Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God”* (Luke 1:35). Our Lord said, *“Which of you convicts Me of sin?”* (John 8:46)
- **Human** → Our Lord was called the Son of Man several times, also, the Bible documents that on several occasions He was thirsty, hungry, tired, sleeping, etc....
- **Mortal** → Even though our Lord is immortal due to His divinity, he assumed a human nature that was liable to die.



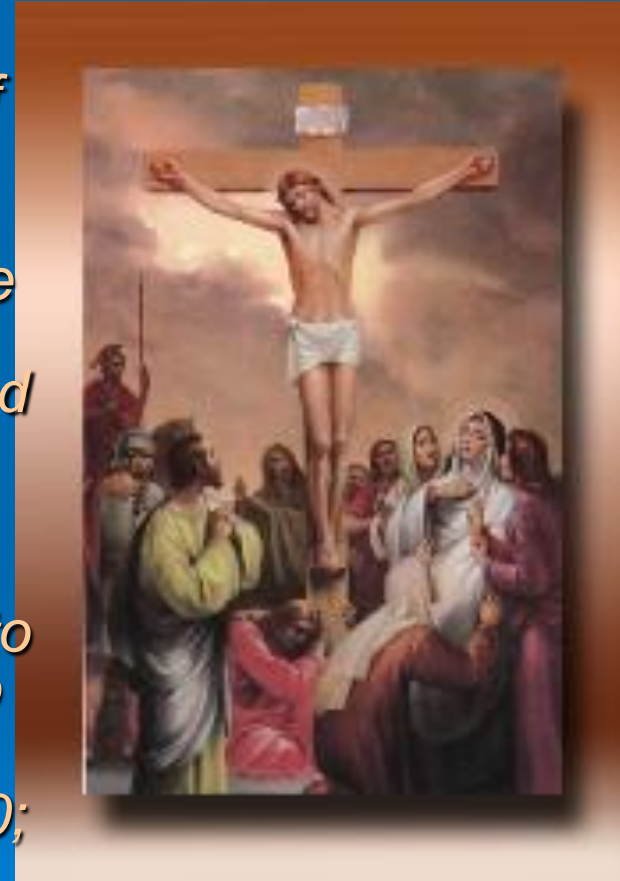
The Ransom

- Our Lord said, ***“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”*** (Mark 10:45).
- St. Paul said, ***“There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all”*** (1 Timothy 2:5-6).
- The word ‘ransom’ suggests some kind of payment and someone to whom this ransom is paid.



To whom was this ransom paid?

- H.H. Pope Shenouda III clarified this issue and said, *“The ransom was paid to the Divine Justice”*.
- *The Old Testament sacrifices were symbols of the sacrifice of the cross.*
- *These sacrifices were not offered to the devil but were offered to God. Hence, holy fire came down from heaven and consumed them (1 Kings 18:38), and it is written that God “smelled a soothing aroma” (Genesis 8:21) after the sacrifice of our father Noah.*
- *Since sin is committed against God (Psalm 51:4) then the price of this sin should be paid to God Himself, the devil has no right to ask or to accept a ransom.*
- *The devil is just an accuser (Revelations 12:10; Job 1).*
- *On the cross our Lord offered Himself to the Father (Luke 23:46) and not to the devil.”*



The Nature of Salvation

- The Incarnation of the Logos restored the human nature to its original state and blessed it giving it the potential to fulfill the destiny of its creation; *“The Likeness of God”*.
- As we pray in the Gregorian Liturgy saying, *“Thou hast blessed my nature in Thee”*.
- And in the **Friday Theotokia**, *“He took what is ours and gave us what is His”*.
- The death of our Lord on the cross gave us the forgiveness of our sins by satisfying the Divine Justice, **“without shedding of blood there is no remission”** (Heb 9:22).
- The creation is still groaning and laboring with birth pangs until now (Rom 8:22), probably because people are still sinning.
- But it will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom 8:21).
- As St. John said in the Holy Book of Revelation, **“I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away”** (Rev 21:1)

Since the death of our Lord satisfied the Divine Justice, why then do we still die?

There is two kinds of deaths:

1. Physical death of the body:

- Concerning this death St. Paul said, ***“The last enemy that will be destroyed is death”*** (1 Cor 15:26).
- This will take place in the resurrection ***“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality”*** (1 Cor 15:53), only then will we sing, ***“O Death, where is your sting?”*** (1 Cor 15:55).
- Meanwhile, this death is left for us as a reminder of the results of sin and we **Christians don't call it death anymore but a departure.**
- ***“For there is no death for Your servants, but a departure”*** (St. Basil's Liturgy); and a gain as St. Paul calls it, ***“To me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain”*** (Phil 1:21)

Why then do we still die? (Part 2)

2. Spiritual death due to sin:

- Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body and this death is the separation of the spirit from God.
- Therefore our Lord said to the Bishop of Sardis, *“you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead”* (Revelations 3:1), in the parable of the Prodigal son the father said, *“my son was dead and is alive again”* (Luke 15:24).
- Our Lord combined the two kinds of deaths in one verse when he said, *“let the dead bury their own dead”* (Matthew 8:22)



Any Questions?