

PART FOUR:  
BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR GOD'S WRATH POSTPONED

CHAPTER 7: BIBLICAL TERMS

I. Deliverance/Salvation

a. Deliverance/Salvation in the Old Testament

Old Testament salvation is predominately physical.<sup>38</sup> Israel, or the representative king, when surrounded by external forces<sup>39</sup>, pleads to another outside source for deliverance. Often the Nation/king is being confronted with a new oppressor. At other times they have been under the oppression of another and appeal for help to be delivered from an existing oppressor.

Often the oppressed calls upon God (or in some cases a leader or other nation) to snatch them out of their present circumstances. The verb נָצַל (natzal), meaning to snatch away, conveys the idea of tearing away. It can mean to take from someone or plunder (Exodus 3:22; 12:36) or take something and give it to another (Gen. 31:9, 16). It is most often used however, to mean deliver. Often we find the phrase "to snatch out of the hand of". To "snatch out of the hand" of another is to deliver the one from the subjection of the one holding them. The first place we see this usage is in Gen. 37:21 where Reuben delivered Joseph "out of the hand" of his brothers. In Exodus 2:19 the daughters of a Median priest report to their father that an Egyptian (Moses) delivered them "from the hand of the shepherds" (see also Ex. 3:8; 18:9,10; Deut. 32:39; Joshua 9:26; 22:31; Judges 8:34; 9:17 etc.).

In most cases it is God who snatches the oppressed out of the hand of the oppressor. He either does it directly (Ex. 18:8-10; Deut. 23:14) or, indirectly through the empowerment of a human deliverer (Judges 18:28; 1 Sam. 30:8). On some occasions, it is God whom the people must be delivered from. In Joshua 22:31 we read, "And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Manasseh, 'Today we know that the LORD; is in our midst, because you have not committed this unfaithful act against the LORD; now you have delivered the sons of Israel from the hand of the LORD.'" The actions of Phinehas satisfied God and brought a halt of God's wrath upon the people, thus Phinehas delivered the people from "the hand of the Lord." Job also states, "According to Your knowledge I am indeed not guilty, Yet there is no deliverance from Your hand." (Job 10:7). And the prophet Hosea records, "And then I will uncover her (Israel's) lewdness In the sight of her lovers, And no one will deliver her out of My hand" (Hos. 2:10, see also 5:14). In each of these passages God is the one inflicting wrath. Those in the path of His wrath need a deliverer to snatch them out of His hand.

At other times (sometimes the same context) the oppressed calls upon deliverer to act as a warrior to fight against an oppressor. Here, the intent is more than simply to snatch them out of their hands of the oppressor. The Savior/Deliverer will yield a sword and fight for the oppressed. The word יָשָׁע (yasha) and its derivatives is used 353 times in the Old Testament and most often has a warrior/savior implied in the context. It is found in four fifths of the Old Testament books

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<sup>38</sup> My intent is to give a general summary. For a more in depth examination of the terms of salvation in both the Old and New Testament see *Theologica dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Kittel, Gerhard, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976.

<sup>39</sup> These are usually human forces, but can be famine or otherwise.

and thus should be considered a major theme. The root meaning of  $\text{יָשַׁע}$  is to "make wide" or "make sufficient". The Savior/Deliver provides freedom for the oppressed and allows for their expansion. Until the exile of Israel this term is always used for physical salvation from an oppressor (Ex. 14:30; Num 10:9; Duet. 20:4; 22:27; 33:29; Josh. 10:6; Judges 3:9; Psalm 3:7; etc.). Either God acts as the warrior/savior or He provides someone who acts as such.

With the exception of two verses in Ezekial (36:29; 37:23)<sup>40</sup> the predominant theme in Old Testament theology regarding salvation is physical. God either acts as a warrior/savior, fighting for oppressed Israel (and/or the king) or he simply snatches them out of the hand of the oppressor. Spiritual salvation is present in the Old Testament, but it doesn't supplant the concept of physical salvation. Physical salvation is still very much a part of Old Testament theology even in post-exilic writings and in the description of the regathering of Israel (Zephaniah 3:17, 19; Zechariah 8:7, 13; 9:9,16; 10:6; 12:7).

Just as spiritual salvation is a part of Old Testament theology, physical salvation should not be omitted from New Testament theology. The Old Testament dispensation was very much alive during the life, and at the death of Christ. It is true that Christ died for individual "sin/s", but it is also true that as Savior He stood between man and one with the power and a reason to inflict wrath that was bigger than man. Christ interceded for the physical salvation of the world.

The primary concentration of salvation in the OT was deliverance from physical wrath and oppression. Physical salvation also has its place in the New Testament. Christ died for "all" physically and he died for the "elect" both physically and spiritually. But even this spiritual salvation has future physical ramifications, in that the elect will be exempt from the physical wrath of God's judgement. Thus, God's wrath was postponed, but not canceled.

## b. Deliverance/Salvation in the New Testament

"Saved" from what? It's a simple enough question. After all, isn't salvation the fundamental issue of the "Good News" of Jesus Christ? Thirty years ago Linda (my wife) and I were visiting a small church in South Florida. I'd recently read the Gospel of John and responded by believing in Jesus Christ. I understood only some of the basics of Christianity, and certainly hadn't become familiar with church language. I simply believed that this Jesus was the Creator, the Son of God, and that he was who the Gospel of John claimed him to be.

Now, back to the little church. After the service that morning one of the elders came to us, and with all good intent asked me, "are you saved?" The look on my face must have revealed that I was puzzled. I asked him, "saved from what?" He hesitantly responded, "saved from your sins?"

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<sup>40</sup> The only real exception to the above understanding of  $\text{יָשַׁע}$  is found in Ezekial. Israel has been defeated by Assyria, and Judea has been taken into Babylon in exile. The oppression is complete. The only hope is for Israel to return to the homeland. No longer is the focus for God to deliver them from their oppressors. Now, the issue is why God hasn't responded previously to their request for physical deliverance. Ezekial's response is that the real enemy should not be considered external forces. The real enemy is within the individuals and the community. Ezekial uses the verb  $\text{יָשַׁע}$  just two times, and these toward the end of his prophecy to Judea, "Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you" (Ezek 36:29), and again, "They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions, but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God" (Ezek. 37:23). In these passages God is not viewed as a warrior/savior against a human oppressor. He is now viewed as a warrior/savior, yielding His sword against the sin that caused Him to reject their appeals against alien oppressors.

Linda understood him and quickly explained to him that I was a recent convert. I did understand that I was forgiving for my sins, but I had difficulty understanding what he meant by saved from sin.

More than thirty years have passed. I've learned the evangelical and church vocabulary. After all, I've attended a respected evangelical seminary, been a pastor in three churches. I've led hundreds of people to Christ through the Church and through my work with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. For twenty years I've been studying the subject that I'm writing about today. And now, thirty years later, I find myself returning to that one fundamental question, "Saved from what?"

We observed in the previous section that the people in the Old Testament were saved from famine, natural catastrophes, oppression from enemies, war, and/or from God's wrath. But, what is the New Testament believer saved from?

We know that Jesus healed the sick, forgave sin, raised the dead and preached the Good News of the Kingdom, but what is the believer saved from? The church often preaches about salvation from the bondage of sin, or salvation from the law, or salvation from sickness and oppression, spiritual salvation, psychological salvation, etc. We are also taught that believers are saved "for" or "unto" good works or eternal life. Much of this however, seems to march around the perimeters of the central issue. What really are we saved from?

In studying the New Testament I was amazed at the proximity of the idea of judgement and/or God's wrath with salvation. We have been saved, are being saved and will be saved from the wrath of God. The subject matter has not significantly changed from that of the Old Testament. There are immediate implications for the believer (indwelling of the Spirit, ability to overcome temptation, etc.) but the salvation is "from" the wrath of God. Some may say we are saved from sin, but isn't that another way of saying we are saved from the effects or consequences of sin, which is the wrath of God?

The concept of the wrath of God is not popular among the modern prophets of love, who rationalize, "if God is love how could He condemn anyone?" They are incapable of understanding or acknowledging God's love being consistent with His attributes of justice and righteousness. So, ignoring Scripture they redefine the fundamental principles of salvation, leaving virtually nothing to be saved from, or at least nothing for which one can't save oneself. But, to be saved for or unto something, one must be first saved from something. That something is the wrath of God.

The best way to illustrate this is to simply let the New Testament speak for itself. The following New Testament Scriptures demonstrate the link of God's wrath to salvation:

Mat 3:7 - But when he (John the Baptist) saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

Luke 21:23 - (Jesus speaking of the end times) "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people;

John 3:36 - "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Romans 1:18 - (Paul speaking of God's wrath presently at work in those that chose to ignore God's general revelation) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Romans 2:5 - But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

Romans 2:8 - but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

Romans 5:9 - Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

Romans 9:22 - What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

Romans 12:19 - Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

Ephesians 5:6 - Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Colossians 3:6 - For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,

1 Thessalonians 1:10 - and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 2:16 - hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 - For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Hebrews 3:11 - AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST."

Revelation 6:16 - and they \*said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

Revelation 6:17 - for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Revelation 11:18 - "And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

Revelation 12:12 - "For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time."

Revelation 14:10 - he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

Revelation 14:19 - So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.

Revelation 15:1 - Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

Revelation 15:7 - Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.

Revelation 16:1 - Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

Revelation 16:19 - The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell.

Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

Revelation 19:15 - From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

Universalist claim that "everyone will be saved". Saved from what, certainly not the wrath of God. God will demand an accounting for every human being that has ever lived. They that are alive at the end of this age will experience the Day of the Lord spoken of by the Old Testament prophets and confirmed by Jesus (Matt. 24), John (Revelation), Peter (2 Peter 1:1-13) and Paul (2 Thessalonians 2). Those that died prior to the Day of the Lord will join these in the day of judgement. John says,

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" Revelation 20:11-15.

The New Testament is not divorced of Old Testament principles. Salvation starts with an offer to the Jews in a Jewish context. Luke, the only Gentile author in the New Testament quotes the Father of John the Baptist, who is looking for the deliverance of Israel,

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant-- As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old-- Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US; To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace." [Luke 1:67-80a]

Zacharias understood that salvation for Israel meant judgement of the Nations that persecuted and hated them. If we examine the history of Israel in relationship to the surrounding nations we understand that none are excluded from Zacharias' description. Zacharias views John preparing the way for a Savior that will yield the sword of judgement on the nations and free Israel from these oppressors.

Israel's national rejection of Messiah placed them in a position with the rest of the nations. They entered into judgement with them, and so, all the nations were guilty before God. The judgement upon the nations, was now the judgement upon the world.

The thesis of "God's wrath postponed" is that the physical world was spared from the wrath of God at the time of the Cross. Christ redeemed the entire world, including every human, from

immediate physical judgement. It is within this context that we explain many of the universal passages in the New Testament.<sup>41</sup> All have literally been saved.

Even after Christ covered (kaphor) the nation and the world from the physical wrath of God the offer of salvation went out to Israel. The early church was made of Jewish believers delivering their message to the Jews and proclaiming repentance and salvation to the nation. It wasn't until it was clear that the nation rejected their Messiah that the Good News proceeded to the Gentiles. Most of the apostles continued to deliver their message to the Jews. Paul calls these the apostles to the Jews and sees his calling to the Gentiles. It was thus the rejection by the Jews that brought salvation to the nations, not just in a spiritual sense, but also in accordance with our thesis. Thus, the Gentiles are indebted to Israel as well as Christ. Paul states, "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery--so that you will not be wise in your own estimation--that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.' 'THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.'" (Romans 11:25-27)

It is at the point where the gospel appeals less to the Gentiles and more to the Jews that we can expect the Day of the Lord to be near. Not that Jews have ever been excluded from the Gospel, there has always been a remnant. But, when the nations reject Him and the Jews receive him, God's wrath on the nations will follow. Zechariah states,

"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. (Zechariah 12:10)

And when the repentance is complete,

Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light. And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one. (Zechariah 14:3-9)

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<sup>41</sup> All have literally been saved. Universalist are correct in acknowledging an "actual" salvation of man. They wrong however, to place this actual salvation in the future and say that "all" will be saved. We agree with the universalist that salvation is actual for all, but we put it in the past. Christ died for all, in that he saved them from God's wrath at the time of the Cross. This salvation is no guarantee of salvation from God's wrath in the future.

It would be an error to refer to the Church age as a parenthesis set between Jewish kingdoms. Although it is the age of the Gentiles, it doesn't preclude the Jews. It is all one Kingdom, but in different stages. The Church age is a partial fulfillment to Abraham that he would be a blessing to many nations. When the nation of Israel is established a new stage will emerge, but it is all part of God's Kingdom.

Salvation is from the wrath of God. The Messiah is the Savior/Deliverer. Only Christ can save. He provided salvation for all by turning back God's wrath at the Cross. However, every man will be held accountable for his sins unless he turns to Messiah for forgiveness of those sins. Next time He comes it will be with a sword in hand. He has baptized believers with the Holy Spirit. He will baptize the unbelieving world with fire.

## II. Atonement

### a. Kaphar (כפר) as a covering in the Old Testament

We mentioned earlier that the term atonement encompasses all that Christ accomplished on the cross at Calvary: reconciliation, redemption, propitiation, deliverance, salvation, justification and forgiveness. In Theology it is sometimes defined as At-One-Ment; the idea that man and God are restored back to an original relationship of oneness that was lost when Adam sinned.

There are many theories of the Atonement. These theories attempt to define how and what Christ accomplished either through his life, by his death, or through his resurrection. They sometimes focus on the extent of the atonement and ask the question "For whom did Christ die?" This is the very issue we are attempting to answer here.

Yet, the term "atonement" does not occur in the Scripture. Does that mean it is an inadequate theological term? No, "trinity" and "rapture" are not in the New Testament either, but the theology of the trinity and the rapture are present.

To get a better understanding of Atonement we must turn to the Old Testament. The word sometimes translated into English "atonement" is the Hebrew word "ka-phar" (כפר). Its oldest literal meaning is best translated into English "cover over". It is used for the first time in Genesis 6:14. God tells Noah, "Make an ark of cypress timbers for yourself. You shall make rooms in the ark; and you shall cover it with pitch inside and out." Both "cover" and "pitch" have the same root – "ka-phar".

The second and final time "ka-phar" is used in Genesis Jacob is about to meet his brother Esau after many years of separation. Jacob is afraid that Esau still holds bitterness towards him and sends a gift hoping to pacify Esau's anger before they meet. Jacob says to his servant, "And you shall also say, Behold, your servant Jacob *is* behind us. For he said, I will cover his face by the present, the one going before my face, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will lift up my face" (Gen 32:20 LITV). The King James and New American Standard (along with other translations) translate "ka-phar" as "appease" to capture the effect Jacob desired by covering Esau with a gift.

There is only one other time in Scripture that both the subject and object of ka-phar are men. The author of Proverbs 16:14 states, "A king's fury *is* as messengers of death, but a wise man will cover it" (Pro 16:14 LITV). Again, the KJV and NAS use "appease" in the place of "cover" to capture the effect of the covering. It appears that the intent of "covering over" is to "appease or pacify" the anger of the one being covered in these passages. The actual "cover" in this passage does not appear to be a gift (as in Gen 32:20) but rather words of wisdom (see verse 13). The thing being covered is not the king but the anger of the king.

To understand ka-phar's meaning it is important to explain what it does not mean. It does not mean "atonement". According to Webster English Dictionary atonement is defined as,

1. Agreement; concord; reconciliation, after enmity or controversy. 2. Expiation; satisfaction or reparation made by giving an equivalent for an injury, or by doing or suffering that which is received in satisfaction for an offense or injury; with for. 3. In theology, the expiation of sin made by the obedience and personal sufferings of Christ.

Reconciliation is often the effect of ka-phar (Eze 43:20; 45:15,17,20; Dan. 9:24; Lev. 6:30; 8:15; 16:20) and is thus translated at times, but it is not the meaning of ka-phar. Neither are expiation or propitiation proper definitions for ka-phar. Again, these are sometimes the effects, but never the intended meaning. Also, as stated earlier the theological use of "Atonement" has become pregnant with meaning that extends beyond Webster's definition. In the New Testament it encompasses all that Jesus accomplished on the cross. Thus "atonement" is misleading as a translation for ka-phar.

Most translations, including the KJV and NAS translate ka-phar with other words that communicate the contextual effect instead of the literal meaning of ka-phar. These include merciful (Deut. 21:8; 32:43), appease or pacify (Gen. 32:20; Prov. 16:14), forgive (Deut. 21:8; Jer. 18:23), purge or clean (Num. 35:33; 1 Sam. 3:14; Psalm 79:9; Isa. 6:7; 22:14; 27:9; Eze. 32:43; 43:26). All of these words describe the result of or desired effect by the subject of ka-phar, but none of these correctly give the meaning of ka-phar. Though much is lost in translation the best English equivalent to ka-phar is "cover over". This may at times seem forced or awkward, but it still comes closer to conveying the literal meaning of ka-phar than does the alternatives.

Why is a covering made? In most cases the intent of the covering is to appease, pacify, or avert anger. Man either attempts to appease, pacify or avert the anger of another man (Gen. 32:30; Prov. 16:14) or God. When God's anger is involved an attempt to cover sometimes occurs when God's wrath is already in process (Ex. 16:41-46; 32:30; Num 16:46; 2 Sam. 21:3). In some instances God provides the cover that appeases, pacifies, or averts his own anger (Deut 21:8; 32:43; Psalm 78:38). In these instances it is clear that the cover is a protection from His judgement. Isaiah records,

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk in the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame kindle on you. For I am Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt for your atonement (kaphor); Ethiopia and Seba instead of you. Since you were precious in My eyes, you are honored, and I love you; and I give men instead of you; and peoples instead of your soul. (Isa 43:2-4 LITV)

Egypt is the "cover" that receives God's wrath in the place of Israel. Along the same line the Psalmist states, "But He, being compassionate, covered over iniquity, and did not destroy; and often He turned away His anger, and did not arouse all His wrath." (Psalm 78:38). The cover is viewed here, not as something to hide iniquity, but to form a shield that averts God's wrath. Thus, in every situation where ka-phor is used it is meant cover over that which is disgusting to God and thus avert His wrath.

What was being covered? When a man is the subject and another man is the object (Gen.32:30; Prov. 16:14) the subject attempts to cover either the other man or his anger. When God is involved in the covering an attempt is never made to cover God or His anger, for God and/or anything regarding Him can not be the object of the covering. Instead, the object of the

covering is the offense (sin, inequity, impurity) that caused God to be angered, the person/s that were responsible for the offense (Deut 32:43; Num 25:13; Ezek. 16:63), or things (house, land, altar, etc.) defiled by the offense. The cover is not an attempt to hide sin and inequity from God. It is a confession of the sin and acknowledgement that the sin or impurity is offensive to God. Unless God accepts the cover (He is never obligated) the person/s responsible for the offense and everything defiled by the offense are condemned and marked by the offense for judgement.

What was the purpose of the covering? The immediate and primary purpose of ka-phar was to avert, pacify or appease God's anger. Ka-phar covered the inequity, impurity or people and things defiled and thus averted, pacified or appeased God's purifying wrath. In some cases the covering acted as an immediate shield from God's anger upon the entire covenant community. In other cases the covering was accepted as a means of washing away the inequities that brought about God's anger. This is especially true of ritualistic covering (Leviticus). On the Day of Atonement (Yom Ka-phar) the priest offered a sacrifice that washed the sins of the whole community and thus acted as a covering for the community. Each person also was responsible to bring a sacrifice to the priest who then offered upon the altar for the person's sins. Sin was viewed as defilement and was figuratively looked upon as filth or uncleanness by God. God would not associate Himself with physical or moral uncleanness. He would not have fellowship with people defiled by any form of uncleanness. Because it was God that was repulsed by the unclean it was God that defined unclean to those He chose to have a relationship. God also defined how they could present themselves as clean so he could have an association with them. As a day-by-day, week-by-week ritual ka-phar was a preventative covering that cleansed the sinner of moral defilement, reminded him of the purity and standards of God, kept him in fellowship with God, thus keeping God's wrath at a distance.

What was used as an acceptable cover? Men accept gifts (Gen. 32:20), words of wisdom (Prov. 16:14), money (2 Sam. 21:4), or justice (2 Sam 21:1-14). These are accepted as payments to placate the wrath of men. God's usual requirement should not be viewed as a means to placate, but as a means of substitution for. Thus most coverings require a "life for life". The blood sacrifice demonstrates the seriousness of the offense, that divine justice requires the verdict of death be carried out for the offense. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar, to atone (kaphor) for your souls; for it is the blood which makes atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11 LITV). This was the means of receiving the covering in ritual ceremony and in some circumstances by an action of one for the sake of the community,

"And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw. And he rose from amidst the congregation and took a javelin in his hand, and went in after the man of Israel, into the tent room. And he pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman, through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the sons of Israel. And those that died by the plague were twenty four thousand. And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned My wrath away from the sons of Israel while he was zealous for My sake among them, so that I did not consume the sons of Israel in My jealousy" (Num 25:7-11 LITV).

There were circumstance that allowed payment other than blood as substantial to cover the people and avert God's wrath (Ex. 30:12; Num. 31:50). These are redemptive, a sacrificial payment.

There are they that object to an understanding of a God who responds to the sinner with anger and wrath. But the Old Testament is plentiful with warnings to those that sin against Him that He will visit them with His anger (Ex. 22:22-24; 32:7-9; Num. 11:31-34; 16:41-46; De. 6:14-15; Jr. 6:10-15; Ezek. 7:3, 8-9; 8:17-18; Zeph. 1:17-18). If this weren't so a covering (Kaphor) would not be necessary.<sup>42</sup>

Much more could be said and should be said about the nature of Kaphor. Our point is to apply it to the work of Christ. Kaphor is a covering that shields the offender from the one offended. It provides physical covering and protection. It is appropriated temporarily to the entire community, even to those that are undeserving of the covering. The sacrifice is viewed as a payment for the protective covering that holds back the physical wrath of God. It effects not only the community but the land occupied by the community.

Christ's death was a Kaphor for the cosmos. He was the sacrificial lamb provided as a payment for the entire community of humanity and humanity's dominion, acting as a Passover, diverting God's wrath. Thus, in a physical sense, all have been saved. Is everyone covered by Christ's death? Yes, in the sense that everyone is alive because Christ's death delivered them from the wrath of God. Are all covered in the future tense? No, everyone that acknowledges that Christ died for them will in effect put on the covering of the righteousness of Christ, thus delivering them from future wrath. Everyone that rejects Christ will be judged by Christ at His second coming.

#### b. Propitiation in the New Testament

Propitiation (ἱλαστέριον Romans 3:25, ἱλασμος 1 John 2:2 & 4:10, ἱλασκομῖα Heb. 2:17) is "the means of turning away wrath"<sup>43</sup> and captures in the New Testament what ka-phar does in the Old. Christ was the offering that turned away the wrath of God. He turned away the immediate wrath of God at the time of the cross, saving all humanity and humanity's dominion from physical annihilation. In this sense He is the Savior of the world.

This is how I John 2:1b-2 can best be understood, "... And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." As an advocate Jesus stands between the world and God petitioning God on the behalf of His people. He is like Abraham making an appeal for Lot, or Moses making His appeal for the nation of Israel. But whereas Abraham and Moses make an appeal, Jesus carries His actions a step farther.

Jesus Christ is the offering that turns away the wrath of God for the sins of believers. He is also the offering that turns away the wrath of God for the sins of the whole world (including non-believers). Jesus offering turned away the actual physical wrath of God upon the physical earth

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<sup>42</sup> The idea of the covering is foreshadowed in the drama of man's original sin. Even though the term ka-phor is not used the concept of the covering is present. Adam and Eve's immediate response after taking and eating the forbidden fruit is the recognition of their nakedness. Their response was to cover themselves (Gen. 3:7). In addition to covering themselves, the couple hid from God. Prior to this time they had not been afraid of God. Their transgression created guilt moving them away from God and fear toward Him. We find later in the story that their attempt to cover themselves was inadequate. This is predictive of all man's future attempts towards atonement. God provided them with the proper covering to protect them from the effects of the curse (Gen. 3:21). Clothing is a constant reminder to God, creation and mankind of the link between the sin of Adam and humanity.

<sup>43</sup> I've intentionally chosen propitiation over expiation. For a clarification on the distinctions see Leon Morris, The Atonement, Inter-varsity Press, 1983, pp. 151-176

and every physical creature on it at the time of the cross. His sacrifice saved the entire world from God's wrath.

John writes this in the present tense, "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins". Though his sacrifice is final the effects of His sacrifice is continuous. Even as Christ presently acts as an advocate for his people his sacrifice continues to avert God's wrath upon this present evil world. The world is spared because believers are spared. As long as believers are in the world, God holds back His judgement on the non-believing world as well.<sup>44</sup>

That the wrath of God should be understood by the word propitiation<sup>45</sup> is clear from the context of Romans 3:25. Paul's argument in chapters 1-3 is centered in revelation of God's wrath. Both the Gentiles (1:18-31; 2:5) and the Jews (3:1-20) are declared as accountable to God and worthy of His wrath. In verse 25 the word translated "propitiation" (NAS, KJV) is the only possible means of satisfying the justice of God. God must display his wrath. Commentators that recognize wrath as central to the meaning of this word usually interpret it "to avert wrath".<sup>46</sup> But Jesus is doing more than simply averting the wrath of God. Rather, he is the recipient of God's wrath. It is only by receiving the wrath of the Father that God's justice can be satisfied. Jesus doesn't simply avert the wrath, but it is done by averting it upon himself. This is consistent with Isaiah's portrayal of the Suffering Messiah (Isaiah 53). For he says of Him, "yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed (vs. 4-5)". Latter he says, "But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief (vs. 10)".

The crucifixion was God's public display of His wrath averted from the deserved recipients, humanity, to the new representative and federal head of humanity, namely Jesus. God's righteousness obligated Him as the judge of the universe to judge the sins of humanity publicly in the courtroom of the universe. But where there was the righteousness of God there was also the forbearance of God. In His forbearance He held back His judgement on the world (passed over) for the sins that were formerly committed. Jesus faithfully fulfilled his voluntary objective and through faith<sup>47</sup> to the Father and the program set out before Him went to the cross and received the judgement of God for the sin's of the world upon Himself. His faith gave God the opportunity to display His righteousness and yet spare the world from His immediate physical wrath. We are told that He did this "that He might be just and the justifier of the one who is of the faith of Jesus." Thus, God demonstrated His justice by executing judgement for sin and justified the elect by reckoning the faith of Jesus to their account. They who are outside of the household of faith are benefactors of Christ's faithfulness because the program that justified the elect also averted the physical wrath of God from creation. They are indebted to Jesus for their present physical existence.

### III. Redemption

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<sup>44</sup> This principle was discussed earlier under the heading of Lot.

<sup>45</sup> C. H. Dodd

<sup>46</sup> Morris, p

<sup>47</sup> Paul often uses the phrase "faith of Jesus" which is translated in most English versions "faith in Jesus". The word for faith used in these verses πιστις, can not be distinguished from "faithfulness". Faith and faithfulness are inseparable. Jesus faith in the Father compelled Him to act faithfully to the program of the Father. Believers are not justified because of their faith in Jesus, but because faithfulness Jesus has been imputed to them. The focus is not on man's faith in Jesus but on Jesus' faithfulness to the Father.

Did the death of Christ pay a price to redeem all, or was it simply for some? Was it sufficient for all, but efficient for the elect only? If his death paid a price for some, then why does the Scripture's say it was for all? But if it was for all, why does it not appear that all have been redeemed? "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time" (1Ti 2:5-6). Christ, who is in essence God, is also in essence human, stands as an intermediary between God and humanity. His ransom was not paid just for some, or even for the many, it was paid for humanity. It was paid for all? It was not paid in a manner whereby "all" are potentially saved.<sup>48</sup> In some sense "all" have been redeemed and have thus been saved. "All" have not been redeemed in the sense that "all" will be saved from ultimate judgement. "All" humanity has been redeemed in the sense that Christ's death paid a price to the Father that stopped the immediate execution of God's judgement upon Creation at the time of the cross. Humanity and the portion of Creation under human headship received the verdict of condemnation. Christ's sacrifice paid the price that stopped the immediate judgement for that condemnation. Thus humanity and humanities' dominion were spared the immediate wrath of God. The world has thus been redeemed (purchased) by the blood of the Lamb.

Does this mean that "all" humanity will be spared God's wrath, that judgement will be withheld indefinitely? No. Peter states, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves" (2Pe 2:1). These false teachers have been redeemed, saved from God's wrath at the time of Christ's sacrifice, yet they will not be saved at the time when judgement will be executed. These men deny the very one that rescued them from God's wrath. By denying their redeemer, they increase their guilt. The intensity of their heresy is amplified by the magnitude of Christ's actions on their account.

#### IV. Reconciliation

In the same manner in which propitiation and redemption apply to all, so does reconciliation. Reconciliation refers to parties that were at one time aligned, then alienated, being brought back together. In the case of humanities relationship to God, man's (Adam)<sup>49</sup> sin brought alienation between man and God. It was not God that needed to be reconciled to man, but man that needed to be reconciled to God. Man had alienated himself from God. Though man was alienated from God when Messiah came into the world, the execution of Messiah intensified the alienation, not just causing separation from God, but bringing about immediate condemnation by God. Alienation and condemnation was complete at the Cross.

Christ's execution sealed the verdict of condemnation, but also provided propitiation and paid a ransom (redemption) freeing humanity from immediate judgement. The effect was that the creation was reconciled to God.

The question of the believer's reconciliation to God is not an issue here. Most of the passages of the New Testament that speak of reconciliation refer to the unique relationship that believers have with God through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:16; Romans 5:6-11). This unique relationship includes the sealing and presence of the Holy Spirit abiding within the believer, and

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<sup>48</sup> This is the view of unlimited atonement. All humanity has been potentially saved, but that only the elect appropriate salvation, and are thus actually saved.

<sup>49</sup> In the Hebrew text the Adam means Man. As the first man, Adam is the representation of man.

the promise to the believer that freedom from condemnation and judgement are applicable to the future. Believers are a completed sphere (in Christ) within the sphere of a physically and partially reconciled world.

In Colossians Paul states,

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 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. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven" (Col. 1:15-20).

Several points need to be brought out of this magnificent passage that are important to our thesis. First, reconciliation encompasses "all thing", not simply 'all believers'. It encompasses all "things on earth and things in heaven." Thus, reconciliation is not restricted to the domain of mankind. The passage does not say, 'all people' or 'all beings', but rather, 'all things'. The entire universe had been disjointed. The entire universe was without peace. Christ's sacrifice covered over the offense that resulted in the alienation and allowed for creation to be reconciled to the Father.

If the creation was in a state of condemnation and judgement at the execution of Christ, and Christ received the wrath of that judgement upon himself, then his sacrifice deflected the wrath of God establishing a physical reconciliation of the Creation. The nature of the reconciliation of the universe, including its principalities and powers is outside of the scope of this book. It is surmised however, that Christ, as Creator and Sustainer of the Universe is in some sense also the Savior of this Universe. The cosmos is not the only thing brought back into reconciliation with God, the entire universe is reconciled to God through the power of the Cross.

It is important to emphasize that the reconciliation of "all" creation is partial in nature. All humanity, as a part of creation, has received physical reconciliation. But humanity can receive complete reconciliation, that is a personal relationship with the Father and freedom from final judgement by acknowledging the finished work of Christ. Humanity is potentially capable of appropriating what the fallen angels cannot, the total withdrawal of condemnation and fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.

Another important passage bringing out the universal nature of reconciliation is 1 Corinthians 1:15-20:

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an

appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2Co 5:14-21)

"One died for all". Christ died for "all", not some or many, but all<sup>50</sup>. It is understood that "all" means all humanity. Not only did Christ die for all, but "all" for whom he died are now considered dead, "therefore all died". The Father looks down upon the creation as if judgement had been applied to creation. Christ received the judgement of death upon himself, now the Father sees the judgement as having been applied to creation, thus all are dead. Paul speaks of this declaration of death often, especially of those who have come to Christ and are thus brought to life (Eph. 2:1-5; 5:14). Again, Paul states, "And he died for all" to emphasize the universal nature of Christ's death.

Within the sphere of the dead humanity, are those that acknowledge Christ's death and resurrection. These are declared "they that live". They live because they acknowledge Christ, are viewed as buried with Christ in his death, and are resurrected with Christ. Among the world of the dead walk the living. They died with the world when Christ took the wrath of God upon himself. They came to life with Christ when they acknowledged him as first born from the dead. They are alive because they live in Christ. They acknowledge that Christ paid a debt for them, therefore they ought to live in a manner that acknowledges that debt.

After discussing the believer as a new creature in Christ, he returns to the theme of reconciliation, "Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation." Much could be said about the believer's ministry of reconciliation, but our focus is on the universal nature of reconciliation. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them". It's not that humanity is without guilt, or that God's wrath is not deserved, but because Christ receive the wrath for them, wrath is withheld, thus God withholds what humanity deserves. Though the wrath has been withheld because of Christ's intervention, humans must acknowledge Christ's works to cancel out future wrath. This is why Paul, even though he says the world is reconciled, also implores humans "we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God".

The world has been literally reconciled to God through Christ. By withholding wrath, God has allowed the world to continue its existence, giving an opportunity to acknowledge the redemption Christ has provided and enter into a relationship with Him. It is one thing to have judgement for the cause of alienation deflected; it is another to reject the one that paid the price that removed the alienation. By not acknowledging the redeemer, the rejection becomes the basis for future judgement. Though the wrath has been withheld, the guilty will not go unpunished.

V. Cosmos

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<sup>50</sup> In many passages Paul uses "all" to mean "Jew and Gentile". The context is usually clear when Paul means all in this manner. The context doesn't seem to warrant such an understanding in this text.