

Was Christ crucified?
Episode 12

Nahed: Hello dear viewers and welcome to a new episode of our program "Questions About Faith." It is our utmost pleasure to answer all the questions that you send to us. And it is also our honor to have with us Father Zakaria Botros to answer all the questions that you have. Welcome to you Father.

Father: Thank you.

Nahed: We have been discussing the fact of Christ's crucifixion. Would you please give us a summary especially for those who have not been watching, so they may be able to follow the subject, because you know how important this subject is to all of us?

Father: This is indeed the main stay of Christianity, its backbone or its pivot. If you remove crucifixion from Christianity, it will be meaningless. This is the foundation. We are talking about the fact of Christ's crucifixion, but in terms of incarnation, that Christ is the Son of God and why? Because He is God incarnated and why? To fulfill our redemption. And we got to know how He accomplished redemption. Because God in the beginning created man in His image and His likeness out of love, provided him with everything. Then sin entered through the devil's malice and deception, who was able to separate man from God by causing him to disobey Him, to break His command. And now man has to face God's fair judgment, he is now condemned to death. "*The wages of sin is death*" "*on the day you eat of this tree you will surely die.*" Now he is faced with a death sentence. We learnt in the previous episode that God is merciful, so would He leave him to die?

Nahed: Of course not.

Father: So, in order not to let him die, because God is merciful and at the same time just. As I spoke about the scales. Justice is tantamount to mercy. So in order to meet the requirements of justice and to show mercy to man the wisdom of God had to come up with the principle of redemption. The principle of redemption. And about redemption which is our issue here, I allow you to talk about it for as long as you want.

Nahed: Well Father, in order to get this across to our Muslim viewers. Is there anything in the Bible and the Quran that proves the principle of redemption? Of course we know it from the Bible. But nonetheless we still would like to show them that this is a Biblical principle and after that we can prove it from the Quran.

Father: Right .

Nahed: Please start.

Father: Well. As far as the Bible is concerned, as I told you, it is all focused about redemption. And that means of course I cannot cite all the verses.

Nahed: Well I know they are too many.

Father: But we will be quoting from the Epistle of the Apostle Paul, the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians chapter 5 verse 14, It says the following “*if One died for all, then all died*” .

Nahed: This needs clarification.

Father: If One here died for all which means in their stead then all died. Then the sentence was executed on them through a Redeemer for all. This bit now has an equivalent

in the Quran. They match almost identically. In Surah 5 (Al Maeda) verse 32 we read the following, *“We prescribed to the children of Israel that anyone who kills any person without another soul being involved.”* I will explain all that *“who kills any person without another soul being involved or for causing mischief in the land acts as if he had killed all mankind”*

Nahed: But...

Father: One moment please. *“And anyone who brings it to life acts as if he has granted life to all mankind.”* You have a question?

Nahed: Please repeat the reference and the explanation
Father.

Father: Surah 5 (Al Maeda) verse 32.

Now the explanation *“we have prescribed to the children of Israel”* and the children of Israel in particular because the children of Israel crucified Christ. It says *“we have prescribed to the children of Israel that anyone who kills any person without another soul”* what does without another soul mean?

Nahed: Without having killed a soul.

Father: Right. That is *“an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth and a soul for a soul.”* You see? So if he had killed a soul he should be put to death on account of that soul. But whoever killed a soul which has not killed another soul, that is innocent, that’s to kill an innocent person.

Nahed: As though he killed all mankind.

Father: As though he killed all mankind. Right? And whoever brings this innocent soul back to life acts as if he

had granted life to all mankind. So where is this innocent soul that died?

Nahed: And who is he? Who can also grant life but Christ!

Father: Isn't that right? The verse again. in order to be understood in the light of this explanation. Surah 5(Al Maeda) verse 32 *“we prescribed to the children of Israel”* in particular, precisely *“that whoever kills a soul without another soul”* that is killed an innocent soul *“or for causing mischief in the land”* that is hasn't corrupted in the land, a pure soul that is *“whoever kills an innocent pure soul acts as if he had killed all mankind”* Almost like a universal death sentence. Now what is more important and greater is *“who brings it to life”* was there a soul that was killed and was brought back to life

Nahed: But Christ!

Father: But Christ! *“who brings it to life acts as if he had granted life to all mankind.”* This is the principle of redemption.

Nahed: But Our beloved Muslims do not understand it that way Father, although it is very clear.

Father: Well, it is only natural that every commentator would explain from his viewpoint. You can't expect a Muslim commentator to say this means the redemption of Christ. For then it wouldn't .

Nahed: Of course, it wouldn't happen .

Father: Well it is impossible. But they justify it, they explain it in a way they find a way out, and so forth. But here I am addressing the mentality of the 21st century. I am addressing the 21st century mentality, educated people, civilized people

where intellect has its place because science has spread out, technology has spread out, and each one thinks for himself, therefore understands for himself. Let's not rely solely on the commentaries given to the Bedouins and the old times in accordance with their mentality, we want modern day commentaries and each one can think what these things mean. Of course if they go to ask any of the Sheiks, they will say are you disbelieving, the devil is in the details, just take it as it is, this is what we have been taught. But the words are very clear, that the principle of redemption is there. Just as it is in the Bible it is in the Quran. The principle of redemption. And What does redemption really mean? Al Imam AL Nassafy الإمام النسفي gave a magnificent explanation in the 4th volume page 21. Al Imam AL Nassafy said

Nahed: In his commentary?

Father: Yes, the commentary of Al Imam AL Nassafy on the issue of the redemption of the son of Abraham. He says redemption is saving, the saving from death by means of a substitute. The meaning of redemption is the saving from death by providing a substitute and a replacement. Therefore it says in Surah 37 (Al Safat) from verse 101 to 107 *"We ransomed him by means of a great sacrifice."* Redemption. The principle of redemption is there, in Surah 37(Al Safat) *"We ransomed him by means of a great sacrifice."* Right? Again there is something else. In the Bible we find the redemption of the son of Abraham. We say it is Isaac,

Nahed: keep it...

Father: Ok, we'll keep it general.

Nahed: The son of Abraham.

Father: The son of Abraham in order to avoid getting into side issues.

For the son of Abraham, He provided a lamb which is the main thing mentioned in Surah 37(Al Safat) “ *We ransomed him by means of a great sacrifice*” where he took the ram and slaughtered it. We have something else. We have in the Bible, when the people of God were in the land of Egypt in slavery. On the night when the people of God left Egypt after the plagues smeared on Pharaoh with the tenth plague which was the plague of the killing of the firstborn throughout the whole of Egypt from the firstborn of the king to the firstborn of the cattle except for the firstborn of the people of God.

Nahed: Why?

Father: Why? They were told that as the angel comes down to kill all the firstborns ‘you must put on your door posts the mark of blood.’ Slaughter a sheep, take its blood and sprinkle it on the threshold and the 2 door posts. As the angel passes by the door and sees the mark of the blood, he would say this one is safe. We have a sacrifice our firstborn won't be slaughtered because we slaughtered the sheep in his stead. Go visit the houses that have not slaughtered, that is the houses of the Egyptians and slaughter and kill their children. So this was a sacrificial lamb and that's why it's called Passover which comes from the word “*Pasakha*” which means passing over. That is to say the angel would pass over and not kill. And Why? Because instead of the firstborn they sacrificed a ram. So here they redeemed their firstborn by means of a ram. This is again the principle of redemption. In Islam there is again the same principle.

Nahed: Yes, I wanted to ask about that. You said that the principle of redemption is mentioned in 2 places. Again for confirmation.

Father: Now in Islam just as the firstborn was redeemed by means of a ram, something happened to Abd Allah the father of Mohamed himself.

Nahed: Yes, that's correct.

Father: When Abd El Mottaleb his grandfather, the grandfather of Mohamed that is. He vowed that if he was given ten children for sons he would dedicate one of them as a sacrifice. He cast a lot among his children, and the lot fell to Abd Allah the father of Mohamed. Mohamed of course had not been born yet. The people of Quraish said No no no , you can't slaughter him. Let us cast a lot. And they went to a soothsayer. They asked her 'we want to cast a lot,' so she cast a lot for them. She asked them 'What is it that you use for ransom?' They said 'we ransom by 10 camels.' She said 'That's ok.' They cast a lot again and again it fell to Abd Allah. The second, third time casting lots, again Abd Allah. It went up from 20 to 30 until 100 camels. So the lot fell to the camels. Are you following? So the people of Quraish rejoiced that the gods accepted the ransom or redemption. And he redeemed the soul of Abd Allah by means of 100 camels . So Abd Allah was not killed, but it was the camels instead.

Nahed: So then the principle of redemption is there, and it is established in Islam.

Father: Definitely. Here is a third confirmation for you. In the Old Testament in the book of Leviticus, there was a law called the law of sacrifices. Anyone who commits a sin must offer a sacrifice because anyone who sins was supposed to be put to death, for the wages of sin is death. So they resorted to redemption, God had stated the law of redemption to them, by means of a sacrifice. And according to the gravity of their sins, each one offered a sacrifice being turtledoves or

young pigeons or a sheep, someone would offer a goat or an ox, an animal sacrifice.

Nahed: According to one's means.

Father: Yes, within their means. This was concerned redemption, and according to the sin. And this was considered redemption instead of the death of the person, they were ransomed by the sacrifices. And this principle is in Islam.

Nahed: The pilgrimage.

Father: AL Nahr the slaughter, or the Adha feast .

Nahed: Yes. That's what I meant.

Father: So you meant the feast of sacrifice, one sacrifices in order to redeem oneself. And of course in the Islamic books, there is a lot about that and I'll tell you some magnificent ones. I had looked them up and read them in a book entitled "Islamic religion in Iran;" it says the sacrifice feast is called in the land of the Persians the feast of offering or animal sacrifice. And you know what they call during their ablutions on that feast, you know what they call out "O, God make this sacrifice an atonement for my transgression and remove evil from me." You'll find this in the book "Deen Al Islam" page 367. "O, God make this sacrifice an atonement for my transgression" that is redemption. "And remove evil from me." And in the book "AL Feqh" by Rabe3a, Muslim narrates about Anas أنس -may God be pleased with him- he says "The prophet -may God's peace and prayer be upon him- sacrificed two fine rams, fully horned, he slaughtered them with his honorable hand." You'll find this in volume 1 page 711. The prophet sacrificed two fine horned rams, that means they were mature. He slaughtered them with his honorable hand. And in Mishkat El Masabeeh مشكاة المصابيح

page 42 it says that as the prophet was slaughtering the rams he said “O God, this is in my stead and in the stead of whoever among my nation who has not sacrificed.” That is accept this as redemption for me and for those among my nation who have not sacrificed, who have not offered a ransom. In the book "Ehiaa' Ulum El Deen" حياء علوم الدين volume 1 page 243.

Nahed: By Imam Al Ghazaly. امام الغزالي

Father: Yes, by Al Ghazaly.

Nahed: Just to make it clear. Yes.

Father: Al Bazzar Abul Sheikh narrated on the strings of Abi Saeed “The messenger of God - may God's peace and prayer be upon him-said “O Fatima” -that is his daughter- “rise to your sacrifices and recite the testimonies for by means of the first drop of their blood, God will forgive your past sins.” So a drop of blood forgives. Because originally in the Bible it says “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

Nahed: No forgiveness, yes.

Father: And hence the inevitability of redemption. Pure and innocent blood must be shed to redeem me. This was for a purpose . Again the book "Ehiaa' Ulum El Deen" volume 1 page 243 says the following “As to the slaughtering of the offering Al Hady that is the sacrifice. “As to the slaughtering of the offering, it is a means of approaching God most high, so you must perfect the offering and seek that God may liberate or free by means of each part of it a part of you from the fire. That is this will atone and redeem himself. This will be his ransom. And therefore the larger the sacrifice and the more abundant its parts, the more extensive you redemption from the fire will be.”

So we are in need of a huge redeemer. The larger the better. Right? Who is this huge redeemer who can redeem all mankind?

Nahed: And here we come to this very important point.

Father: What is it? What do you mean?

Nahed: Who is capable of redeeming all humanity? And what are the attributes that make him able to do that?

Father: Quite right. Now we come to

Nahed: the crux of the matter and also the bone of contention, the exact thing they object to.

Father: Yes, this is the crux of the whole matter. This is the cause of the incarnation.

Nahed: All the Divine provision.

Father: And the crucifixion, all because of this point . Who I wonder is that redeemer? What conditions should that redeemer meet? Pay close attention my dear viewers, we will go one bit at a time because the topic requires a lot of deliberation. If you are not in a good mood now record this episode in order to hear it later on. Give it time. Let's first deal with sin in order to be able to see the ransom. Sin is measured in magnitude and offence, whether it's big or small by the person offended. If I offend an ordinary or a simple person.

Nahed: Well one human against another.

Father: I mean just an ordinary person. No what I want to say is maybe a janitor or on office boy, if I offended such a person it is still sin, it is an offence. How can I remedy it? Or

how can I redeem it? I would go to him and I know what to do, I'll get out a 50 dollar bill or 100 dollar bill and I'll tell him keep it for your children or to pay for your tea. He would say "O, Mr. why all that ?" I would answer "well I offended you, I swore at you." And the poor guy would say "Oh I wish you would swear at me everyday sir." Isn't that right? Suppose this curse or this offence which I committed against my office boy. Now suppose I committed the same against my boss.

Nahed: Then the redemption must be bigger.

Father: Can I still go to my boss and say "Please take this 100 dollar bill?"

Nahed: Of course not.

Father: You cannot pay your way out of it. No way, it's now gotten bigger. Now suppose I committed the same offence against the president of the country. Now it is a totally different story.

Nahed: You will vanish.

Father: Yes, I'll be no more. Well I'm talking about any president now. I don't want this to be taken personally. I don't want anyone to say I'm cursing Abf El Nasser. Are you following? Now my sin has gotten bigger, and its magnitude became as big as the one I offended, the worthier he is, the larger my sin is.

Ok. Now we come to the person who offends God. Any man even the president of a country is still limited, but God is unlimited, therefore any offence against Him is also unlimited. Any number multiplied by infinity equals infinity. Right? One times infinity equals infinity. So my single sin against the infinite God equals infinity. Right? So now my

offence against the infinite God has become huge, unlimited. Alright. What is the punishment of it?

Nahed: Death.

Father: My offence is already unlimited. This death must be eternal death. Also unlimited.

Nahed: As we said in the previous time.

Father: Yes, in the previous episode. Now it has become an unlimited sin worthy of an unlimited punishment, eternal death. Ok when we attempt to redeem it, what sort of redeemer do we use here?

Nahed: Someone suitable.

Father: Also unlimited. Is this right or wrong? Well assume I took your car a Rolls Royce and I ran it against a tree. Would I get you a Fiat and say 'please excuse me I totaled your Rolls Royce would you please take this one in its stead.' This won't do.

Nahed: Nonsense.

Father: You can't do that. A Rolls Royce car must be redeemed by a Rolls Royce car. Right? A sin against God requires unlimited redemption commensurate with God and that's impossible. To have any redeemer on earth among mortal men who is at the same time unlimited, which then required that the unlimited God would come to redeem us. He himself would redeem. OK. So that was the first condition that the redeemer must be unlimited, because sin is unlimited and its punishment is unlimited and its redemption must also be unlimited. And the only unlimited person is God, and hence was the inevitability of incarnation. God Himself had to come. Right? Is there

anything in Islam to confirm that it is God who atones? And that He is the One to atone? Certainly. Islam maintains that it is God who atones. A Quranic verse. Listen. In Surah (Al Talak) 65 , Surah 65 (Al Talak) *“anyone who heeds God will have his evil deeds atoned for.”*

Nahed: That is, it's God Himself who makes atonement.

Father: I didn't make that up.

Nahed: No, you didn't.

Father: The words are there, but where are those who read and understand? Is that right? Surah 65 (Al Talak) *“any one who heeds God will have his evil deeds atoned for”*. So it is God Who makes the atonement. Because it is God Who is the only unlimited person. And again in Surah 5(Al Maeda) *“I will atone for your evil deeds and show you into gardens, the gardens of pleasure”* *“I will atone”* so the first condition for redemption is that it would be...

Nahed: Excuse me there is something that requires a bit of clarification.

Father: O please ask.

Nahed: Sometimes our beloved Muslims say God forgives, they don't believe in the atonement, they say that atonement actually means forgiveness of sins, not the way we understand it. So we want to clarify the difference between the two. The forgiveness and the atonement.

Father: Of course the word “Yukaffer” is to atone, has a different root than “Takfeer and Higma.” Let's at the beginning separate this meaning from that meaning. Takfeer and Higma tells a person you're an infidel.

Nahed: No, we leave this alone, it's got nothing to do with us.

Father: "Kafer" in the sense of calling somebody an infidel. Let no one say that God Yukaffer in the sense of calling people infidels. No. Takfeer is related to the root word cover. Cover is to conceal.

Nahed: Concealment.

Father: In all languages it means to cover. "Takfeer" be it in Arabic, in Hebrew it all means to cover, even in English. All of them. So Yukaffer is to cover. There is a defect which he covers, to cure it, as I told you last time "*So I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness.*" So through atonement, there is covering, concealment. And covering involves redemption, self sacrifice on behalf of the sinful person. Right? Atoning for the person. So that's the meaning of atonement. As to forgiveness, it is to pardon when you have covered, you pardon. I cover your sin, those who love you will forgive you any offence, but an enemy will only find fault with you. So the word cover, to conceal, to atone and then to forgive you for the offence you have committed because it has been covered. So someone would offend me and then later I would say 'it's ok it's ok.' Consider it not there anymore. We are alright now and as if you haven't done anything because I pardon you. This way I covered his sin and forgave it. So God atones for our sins. That is He conceals them and He pardons us. To forgive is to pardon. Isn't that right? But atonement is to cover and it is a prerequisite.

Nahed: This is exactly the point that we want to get across.

Father: Ok. Let me give you an illustration. Adam and Eve, both of them sinned in the garden, and after they have sinned they became naked, they found themselves naked. So

they started to sow tree leaves to cover themselves, to cover their nakedness. The sun would rise, the leaves would dry up and their nakedness becomes visible. There is no use. Man's own works do not atone for him, do not cover him, do not conceal him. They do not cover his body. Alright? And by the way, the other sense of Yukaffer in the sense of making infidel is Yukafferuhu but in our sense here is Yukaffer 'Anhu. So what did God do? The Bible says that "He got them shirts of animal skin and clothed them" And those did not dry up from the sun. But where did He get the skin from?

Nahed: A sacrifice.

Father: A sacrifice. Then sacrifice is the redemption and the righteousness of the sacrifice is taken on, the dress of the sacrifice is taken to cover man to atone for his misdeeds. And hence the belief that it is God who atones for our sins when He redeems us with a sacrifice and about this sacrifice we said the first prerequisite is that he should be unlimited, unlimited because sin is also unlimited and the punishment is unlimited which requires unlimited redemption.

Nahed: I think this way we made it very clear to our beloved ones everywhere that the principle of redemption is in the Quran and in Islam. It is also evident in the Muslim practices themselves, and the simplest illustration of that is the sheep that's sacrificed on the feast of sacrifice.

Father: You know I want to say something before you conclude the program because it is high time. The first prerequisite is unlimitedness, there is a second prerequisite that he should be human the third is that he should be pure. I mean there are three prerequisites. In this episode I covered only the first one, the unlimitedness.

Nahed: We are grateful Father to have you with us, may God bless you and bless your ministry. My dear viewers everywhere, be sure that God is a loving Father. He wants to atone for your sins. Dear viewers, we will meet again God willing. Thank you. Till we meet again.

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