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Suffering on the cross was the final trial the Lord underwent as the greatest prophet. It was a means of glorifying his human nature, that is, of uniting that nature to his Father's divine nature. It was not redemption. There are two things for which the Lord came into the world and through which he saved people and angels: redemption, and the glorification of his human aspect. These two things are distinct from each other, but they become one in contributing to salvation.

In the preceding points we have shown what redemption was: battling the hells, gaining control over them, and then restructuring the heavens. Glorification, however, was the uniting of the Lord's human nature with the divine nature of his Father. This process occurred in successive stages and was completed by the suffering on the cross.

All of us have to do our part and move closer to God. The closer we come to God, the more God enters us, which is his part. It is similar with a house of worship: first it has to be built by human hands; then it has to be dedicated; and finally prayers are said for God to be present and unite himself to the church that gathers there.

The union itself [between the Lord's divine and human natures] was completed by the suffering on the cross, because this suffering was the final spiritual test that the Lord went through in the world. Spiritual tests lead to a partnership [with God]. During our spiritual tests, we are apparently left completely alone, although in fact we are not alone - at those times God is most intimately present at our deepest level giving us support. Because of that inner presence, when any of us have success in a spiritual test we form a partnership with God at the deepest level. In the Lord's case, he was then united to God, his Father, at the deepest level.

The Lord was left to himself during the suffering on the cross, as is clear from his crying out on the cross: "God, why have you abandoned me?" [[Matthew 27:46](#)]. This is also clear from the following words spoken by the Lord: "No one is taking my life away from me - I am laying it down by myself. I have the power to lay it down and I have the power to take it up again. I received this command from my Father" ([John 10:18](#)).

From the points just made it is clear that it was not the Lord's divine nature that suffered, it was his human nature; and then the deepest union, a complete union, took place.

An illustration of this is that when we suffer physically, our soul does not suffer, it merely feels distress. After victory, God relieves that distress and washes it away like tears from our eyes.

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Redemption and the suffering on the cross must be seen as separate. Otherwise the human mind gets wrecked as a ship does on sandbars or rocks, causing the loss of the ship, the helmsman, the captain, and the sailors. It goes astray in everything having to do with salvation by the Lord. If we lack separate ideas of these two things we are in a kind of dream; we see images that are unreal and we make conjectures based on them that we think are real but are just made up. We are like someone walking out [to a tryst] at night, who, thinking that the leaves of a tree within his grasp are human tresses, sidles closer, only to entangle his own hair in them.

Although redemption and the suffering on the cross are two different things, nevertheless they become one in contributing to salvation. When the Lord became united to his Father, which happened through the suffering on the cross, he became the Redeemer forever.

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Believing that the Lord's suffering on the cross was redemption itself is a fundamental error on the part of the church. That error, along with the error about three divine Persons from eternity, has ruined the whole church to the point that there is nothing spiritual left in it anymore. There is no topic that fills more books by orthodox theologians today, that is more intensely taught and aired in lecture halls, or that is more frequently preached and pronounced from the pulpit than the following: God the Father was angry at the human race, so he not only moved us all away from himself but locked us into a universal damnation and cut off communication with us. Nevertheless, because he is gracious, he either convinced or goaded his Son to come down to take a limited damnation on himself and ritually purge the Father's anger. This was the only way the Father could look on the human race with any favor. So this was in fact done by the Son. For example, in taking on our damnation, the Son let the Jews whip him, spit in his face, and then crucify him like someone accursed of God (Deuteronomy 21:23). After that happened the Father was appeased, and out of love for his Son he retracted the damnation, but only from those for whom the Son would intercede. Therefore the Son became a Mediator to the Father for all time.

[2] These ideas, and others like them, resound in churches today and reverberate off the walls like an echo from a forest, filling the ears of all who are there. Surely, though, everyone with decent reasoning enlightened by the Word can see that God is compassion and mercy itself. He is absolute love and absolute goodness - these qualities are his essence. It is a contradiction to say that compassion itself or absolute goodness could look at the human race with anger and lock us all into damnation, and still keep its divine essence. Attitudes and actions of that kind belong to a wicked person, not a virtuous one. They belong to a spirit from hell, not an angel of heaven. It is horrendous to attribute them to God.

[3] If you investigate what caused these ideas, you find this: People have taken the suffering on the cross to be redemption itself. The ideas above have flowed from this idea the way one falsity flows from another in an unbroken chain. All you get from a vinegar bottle is vinegar. All you get from an insane mind is insanity.

Any inference leads to a series of related propositions. These are latent within the original inference and come forth from it, one after the other. This idea, that the suffering on the cross was redemption, has the capacity to yield more and more ideas that are offensive and disgraceful to God,

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This true redemption could not have happened if God had not come in the flesh. The preceding point showed that redemption was something only the Divine could bring about - for anyone other than God Almighty it would have been impossible. Furthermore, God could not have brought about this redemption if he had not taken on flesh (that is, become human), because in his infinite essence Jehovah God could not come near hell, let alone enter it. He exists in what is first and most pure. If Jehovah God as he is in himself were only to breathe on those who are in hell he would instantly kill them all. When Moses wanted to see him he said, "You cannot see my faces, because no human being will see me and stay alive" (Exodus 33:20). If Moses could not do this, still less could those who are in hell, where everyone exists in what is lowest, densest, and farthest away [from God]. Those who are earthly are the lowest. Therefore if Jehovah God had not taken on a human manifestation, clothing himself with a body that is on the lowest level, his undertaking any act of redemption would have been a waste of time.

We could not attack an enemy without being armed for battle and coming within range. We could not destroy or drive away the dragons, hydras, and basilisks in some desert without putting a breastplate on our body, a helmet on our head, and a spear in our hand. We could not catch whales at sea without a ship and whaling equipment. These examples are not actual parallels, but they do illustrate the fact that God Almighty could not have even attempted to battle hell without first putting on a human manifestation.

[2] It is important to know, however, that the Lord's battle with the hells was not some verbal to and fro like a philosophical debate or a legal battle. That kind of battle has no effect whatever on hell. It was a spiritual battle using the divine truth connected with divine good - the very vitality of the Lord. When this truth visibly flows in, no one in the hells is able to oppose it. There is so much power in it that when demons from hell merely sense that it might be present they run away, throw themselves down into deep places, and squeeze into underground shelters to hide.