

Ransom and Sin Offering

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

—I Timothy 2:5,6

The word “ransom” in our opening text is translated from the Greek *antilutron*, which signifies a corresponding or equivalent price—specifically, a price of redemption. This definition enables us to appreciate that the whole race of mankind has been dying because of Adam’s sin and is in need of redemption. It also teaches us that through the righteousness of “the man Christ Jesus,” who was “separate from sinners,” all mankind will be redeemed and raised from the tomb.—Heb. 7:26; John 5:28,29; I Cor. 15:21,22

If the providing of a ransom for Father Adam and his offspring was the entire scope of God’s plan, however, a few problems would exist. First, because there is “no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave,” there is no change in fallen humanity’s character in death. (Eccles. 9:10) Therefore, when awakened, mankind would

still be in a sinful state and thus condemned to death again. Paul wrote, “It is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of the living God.”—Heb. 10:31

Secondly, had the perfect man Jesus died without some provision being made of a future existence, he would have given his life for mankind but would forever have ceased to exist. Such would prove to be an impossible situation. Christ was obedient, unlike Adam, who because of sin forfeited his life. The righteous Son of God, however, voluntarily gave up his human life rights to purchase Adam and the fallen race. Under such circumstances, Jesus would have in effect lost his life forever while he fully did the will of God in every particular.

Thirdly, if Jesus were not to receive some form of future life for his obedience in willingly giving of his human existence, there would be nobody available to apply the value, or merit, of his sacrifice to release mankind from Adamic condemnation. By dying to the earthly nature Jesus, and subsequently the church, attain the divine nature and the priestly office of Messiah, the Christ class. (I Cor. 12:12-14,27) The doctrine of the sin offering addresses these and other related issues because it is God’s plan that all vestiges of sin in mankind will be destroyed as a result of the process of restitution.—Isa. 35:8-10; Acts 3:20,21

Jesus’ Offering for Sin

The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus furnished the ransom price as the “Lamb of God” by his death as a perfect man. (John 1:29; Isa 53:7) In addition, the Bible tells us that by faithfully offering himself daily in sacrifice and service, and

by his sufferings for three and one-half years, he qualified himself to be a sympathetic high priest, “after the order of Melchisedec.” (Heb. 6:20) Thus, in addition to providing the ransom price for Adam and his race, Jesus will effect the complete restoration of all that was lost and bring mankind back to human perfection.

Here are two scriptures affirming that, in addition to the ransom, the above-described “offering for sin” by Jesus for three and one-half years is a vital part of the means by which the full recovery and restoration of mankind will come to pass during Christ’s glorious kingdom reign. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect [complete], he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.” (Heb. 5:8-10) Isaiah, speaking prophetically concerning Christ, wrote this: “It pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.” —Isa. 53:10

An Important Distinction

Here we should note the following distinction between the ransom and the sin offering, as they apply to Jesus. A period of suffering and sacrifice was not required by God for Jesus to provide the ransom price. The ransom simply required death as a perfect human being—a perfect life given for the perfect life of Adam that was forfeited.

At the age of thirty, Jesus presented himself on the banks of the Jordan to give his perfect humanity for Father Adam, symbolized by his water baptism. At that moment, had it been God's will, or any time thereafter, Jesus could have died as the ransom—a corresponding price—as long as he maintained his human perfection. He was the only human being who could do this, because all other individuals were imperfect. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23) Neither the church, nor anyone else, could have any part in providing the ransom price.

Sharing in Jesus' Sacrifice

In the Atonement Day sin offering of Israel, described in Leviticus chapter 16, both a "bullock of the sin offering" and a "goat of the sin offering" were sacrificed. (vss. 11,15) In this same chapter, verses 3 and 6 indicate that the bullock came from Aaron's own herd, whereas in verse 5, it states that the two goats, only one of which was sacrificed as a sin offering, were taken from the "congregation" of Israel.

The different origins of these animals indicate they both could not have pictured Jesus. Additionally, Christ could not be offered twice, once as the bullock and again as the Lord's goat. Thus we believe that the bullock, belonging to the high priest, was a fitting representation of the man Jesus during the three and one-half years of his sacrificial earthly ministry. His being undefiled and separate from sinners would not be equated as coming from the "congregation," picturing the sinful world of mankind, as was true in the case of the Lord's goat.

The bullock for the sin offering was for Aaron and "his house," which represents the spirit begotten of the present age, whereas the Lord's goat for the sin offering was "for the people," picturing the world of mankind. (Lev. 16:11,15) The fact that the bullock was offered first, then the Lord's goat, fittingly shows that atonement and its benefits to the church are accomplished in advance of those to the world of mankind.

Here we ask a vital question: Keeping in mind that only Jesus could provide the ransom, does the church, in its present imperfect condition, have anything acceptable to offer in fulfillment of the Lord's goat picture? In prophetic language, Isaiah wrote: "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." (Isa. 61:10) It is absolutely true that we are all presently tainted by sin and unrighteousness. However, consecrated believers who have been justified by faith in the covering "robe" of Jesus' righteousness are no longer viewed by God as sinners but rather as New Creatures in Christ.—II Cor. 5:17

We note the following additional scriptures: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. ... For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

... Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."—Rom. 8:1-4,33

In harmony with the foregoing, as Christians, it is not our sinful nature that is pictured as being offered, but rather those perfect human life rights which are now imputed to us by faith in Jesus' meritorious sacrifice. Having given up that prospective life of human perfection in the coming earthly kingdom, we can now offer it as a sacrifice, "acceptable unto God" through Christ. (Rom. 12:1) As Paul further states, we are now of those who "seek for glory and honour and immortality."—Rom. 2:7

When the mother of James and John desired that they be at the places of chief favor in the kingdom, Jesus indicated they would be baptized into his death baptism; they would also partake of his suffering and ignominy associated with his life that was poured out. Jesus said to James and John, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" When they answered affirmatively, Jesus said, "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with." (Matt. 20:22,23) Each member of the church is to share in some way Jesus' experiences of suffering, sacrifice, and service, that they, like him, may develop the necessary character qualities to be part of the "royal priesthood."—I Pet. 2:9

"Without the Camp"

The Apostle Paul made specific reference to many features of the Law Covenant arrangement. In one of these, the apostle connects both Jesus and the church to one of the activities that took place on Israel's Day of Atonement (Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 31) —specifically, regarding the bullock and the Lord’s goat both being burned “without the camp” of Israel. (Lev. 16:27) We believe Paul’s words indicate that both Jesus and the church are shown in the sin offering picture. He states: “The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”—Heb.13:11-14

We note that in the foregoing quote, the word “bodies” in verse 11 is, in the Greek, denoted specifically in plural form. This is in harmony with the thought that more than one animal, the bullock and the Lord’s goat, are being referred to by the Apostle Paul. He affirms that both bodies, whose blood was brought into the sanctuary by the high priest “for sin,” were burned “without the camp.” Applying the picture, Paul then says that Jesus “suffered without the gate.” Indeed, he suffered not only outside the gate of Jerusalem, but also outside the favor of the social and religious systems of the time. Paul concludes by then encouraging the church to do likewise in “bearing his reproach.”

In all of this, we should note that the two animals, bullock and goat, constituted the one complete offering made by the high priest. The blood of this all-inclusive offering effected the one atonement for Aaron, his house, and all the people, as explained in Leviticus 16:17,27,30,34.

The Oneness of Christ

Paul wrote: “As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also, is Christ.” “Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” (I Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:11) The church, as members of Christ’s body, is accepted as part of his own sacrifice. We again stress, however, that it was Christ’s merit alone that gave the church a standing. Thus, in reality, the blood of Lord’s goat, as represented in the church, belongs to Christ, and he has been offering the church, his body, as a part of his own sacrifice. His sacrifice alone makes theirs acceptable. Paul states that God “hath made us accepted in the beloved.”—Eph. 1:6

We reference these additional texts to emphasize that the present righteousness of the church has only been made possible through Christ Jesus. “For him who knew no sin, he made a sin offering on our behalf, that we might become God’s righteousness in him.” “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: ... Not having mine own righteousness, ... but that which is through the faith of Christ.”—II Cor. 5:21, *The Emphatic Diaglott*; Phil. 3:8,9

Further Testimony

The Apostle Paul testifies in another place: “That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” (Rom.15:16) Paul here indicates that the church’s offering is

being made acceptable through sanctification by the Holy Spirit. Most assuredly, the Holy Spirit guides and assists the church in its daily work of sacrifice and service.

We recall, too, the promise that through Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The apostle identifies Christ as that seed. He then adds these words: "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:8,16,28,29) As part of the spiritual seed of Abraham, the church will share in blessing all the families of the earth. There could be no greater work than assisting in the removal of the vestiges of sin in mankind as they progress towards perfection in the kingdom.

The world of mankind will have Christ as its mediator during the kingdom period. (I Tim. 2:5,6) As members of the Lord's body, the church will be uniquely qualified to assist in bringing the people up the highway of holiness. The experiences we will have had during our own Christian walk will equip us for this task in the kingdom. On the one hand, we will have had to deal with our own struggles and weaknesses. Being acquainted with the requirements of God, we will be able to help educate humanity as to the requirements of divine law. At the same time, we can be merciful and sympathetic in recognizing that perfection of heart and mind by the world will not be instantaneous, but a gradual process throughout the earthly kingdom.

Another view of our subject is pictured in the concept of first fruits. Revelation 14:4 states, concerning the glorified church: "These are they which

were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.”

In the ceremonies of Israel, the firstfruits of their spring grain harvest were offered to God. This consisted of two offerings. (Lev. 23:10-18) The first offering mentioned in this account, made on the 16th day of the month Abib, was the waving of a barley sheaf. This pointed to Jesus, the firstfruits of the resurrection, whom God raised from the dead on exactly the same day, Jewish reckoning. Returning to the Leviticus account, fifty days after the waving of the sheaf of the firstfruits of the barley harvest, the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were presented as a wave offering. In fulfillment, the church also was symbolically offered as a firstfruits class on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days following the resurrection of Jesus.—Acts 2:1-4

Following Jesus' Example

We follow Jesus' example and should rejoice in the privilege of suffering for his cause. We do this bearing in mind the ultimate goal is to help eradicate sin as part of the priestly and mediatorial work of the kingdom. This will be the blessed privilege of those who are part of the “firstfruits” of the resurrection. (I Cor. 15:22,23) If such was not the case, there would be little meaning to the Apostle Paul's words concerning himself and by extension applying to all the church: “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?”—I Cor. 15:29,30

If we are faithful to our calling, we shall help to offer the benefits of Jesus' death as mankind's Redeemer to the entire world. Then, the "Spirit and the bride" will say to the people, "Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—Rev. 22:17

The footstep followers of Jesus have many opportunities for sacrifice, suffering, and service. This implies that it was the divine intention to give the church a share in the experiences that would enable them to be "priests of God and of Christ" during his kingdom reign. (Rev. 20:6) As part of this, the laying down of our lives on behalf of our brethren in the service of the Truth will do much to prove the sincerity of the presentation of our bodies as a living sacrifice.—Rom. 12:1

Our Lord credits faithfulness in bearing reproach, suffering, serving, and everything else connected with our sacrifice as part of his afflictions. This is the case, provided such experiences are the result of our voluntary activity in his name and in the furtherance of his cause. As the psalmist wrote, none of us "can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." (Ps. 49:7) However, we can, and we must in order to be faithful, be heartily engaged in sacrifice and service, even to the extent of suffering "for righteousness' sake." (Matt. 5:10) If we do so, as Peter said, "Happy are ye!" (I Pet. 3:14) Why are we happy? We are happy because we are being trained for the great future work of assisting mankind back to perfection and favor with God.

Concluding Observations

In summary, the ransom price was provided by Jesus alone to effect mankind's redemption from Adamic sin. This he did by dying as a perfect human being, thus purchasing Adam and the entire race that was condemned through his sin. The sin offering is the process by which actual atonement will be achieved for mankind.

Christ is composed of not one, but many members. Once complete, the Christ class, Head and body, will comprise the seed of promise and the great Melchisedec high priest. Their sufferings, sacrifice, and service in this life qualify them to engage in the glorious work of reconciling man back to God. How thankful we should be for the divine provision which has permitted the church to become part of this most glorious arrangement. Obadiah 1:21 states the matter succinctly: "Saviours shall come up on Mount Zion." If faithful, we will be a part of that class.—Heb. 12:22,23; Rev. 14:1-4 ■