

A RANSOM FOR ALL

“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.” – 1 Timothy 2:5, 6

“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” – Matthew 20:28

If there is any one word associated with the ministry of Jesus at his first advent, it is the word “ransom.” The word in the original language of the Bible that is translated “ransom” in these verses is a combination of two Greek words: “anti,” meaning “corresponding” and “lutron,” meaning “a price.” Thus the combination means “a price to correspond” or “a corresponding price.”

The correspondence in this case is spelled out in specific terms by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22:

“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

This concept of correspondence is based on the requirements of the Mosaic Law found in Exodus 21:23 – “life for life.” The logical extension of this formula is “a perfect human life for a perfect human life.”

But the correspondence goes much further. Not only did Adam’s sin begin the dying process for himself, but the sentence of death was passed on to his posterity as well. Speaking of himself as a member of the human race, King David wrote in Psalm 51:5:

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

It is for this reason that we read in Psalm 49:7:

“None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him”

This, however, did not apply to Jesus, for he is described as “holy, harmless, undefiled.” (Hebrews 7:26) Even though born of an imperfect mother, the perfect life principle transmitted by his Heavenly Father was of such perfection so as to overrule any deficiencies from his mother. In a similar vein, we find the perfect creation of Adam attributed to the fatherhood of God. (Luke 3:38)

It is this simple basic truth, the “ransom,” which shows the correspondence between Jesus and Adam (and his entire posterity as well). For this reason many Christians have appropriately adopted the term “substitutionary atonement” to describe the ransom—the

life of Jesus Christ willingly substituted for that of Adam and the race yet in his loins—all mankind.

It is “for this cause” that Jesus came into the world—to provide salvation for **ALL** “to be testified in due time.” No wonder Christians sing with joy:

“Hallelujah, What a Savior!”

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

“Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.” – 1 Corinthians 15:20

In discussing the importance of the ransom work, we note the equally important feature of the resurrection of Jesus. There is a logical question, however, which should be examined. In the previous article, the point was made that Jesus’ life was given as a payment price for the life of Adam and his race. This payment price, called the ransom, was given over to justice to purchase the release of mankind from the penalty of death. The question which arises is that, “If Jesus’ life was the payment price for our sins, then would his resurrection imply a taking back of that price?”

This thoughtful question is based on the scriptural principle that God’s justice is very exacting. It demands a life for a life. A perfect life had to be offered in order to release Adam and his race from the death penalty.

The answer to this question gives us a unique insight into God’s plan. The Bible teaches that there were various features to the work of Jesus. If his only purpose in coming to earth was to become the ransom for Adam, then his life of suffering and sacrifice would not have been necessary. He could have come as a perfect man and simply offered up his life. The reality, however, is that Jesus entered into a special “covenant of sacrifice” with God. The terms and conditions of this covenant involved self-sacrifice and suffering. Paul alludes to this in Philippians 2:8. He writes:

“Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

There was a purpose in the suffering of Jesus. In His wisdom God knew that only first-hand experience could truly teach Jesus how to be sympathetic to a sinful, dying race. Notice again the words of the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 2:17, 18:

“...It behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest...For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.”

What wonderful wisdom to know that we would need a merciful high priest in heaven. God's desire is that we have a complete recovery from sin. In order for that recovery to be complete, Jesus would have to live and function in this role of a succoring high priest. But again we come to the question of how justice could allow his resurrection if justice also demanded his life as a payment price?

The answer is really quite simple. His resurrection was a reward for fulfilling his covenant of sacrifice. Notice in the context of Philippians 2 what follows the verses we quoted earlier. After explaining how Jesus obediently submitted to the death of the cross, Paul follows by saying, "**Wherefore** God hath highly exalted him." Jesus' exaltation was the result of a faithful sacrifice.

The resurrection of Jesus is extremely important in the success of God's plan for the salvation of man. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus has now been "touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Based on this assurance of Jesus' sympathetic understanding, Paul further admonishes us, saying, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

His work of compassionately dealing with our fallen natures is another feature which God added to the work of the ransom. This work goes on, not only in the lives of today's Christians, but will also be the major work of the coming kingdom for which Jesus taught us to pray.

In thinking about the resurrection of Jesus we can rejoice with the early disciples who were privileged to see and talk with him after his resurrection. What hope that should inspire in our faith! What confidence it should give us that God is all powerful and able even to raise us from the dead!