

THE RANSOM

(Discourse by A. I. Ritchie, 1916 Convention Report, starting on page 57.)

The ransom is the distinguishing feature of the Christian religion. No other religion in the world has this feature or anything very much like it. Indeed, the world would naturally never think of such a thing as a ransom, because God did not reveal to the world that a ransom would be acceptable to Him. True, various religions have offered human sacrifices, and many have offered sacrifices of animals, probably imitating the ancient patriarchs and Jews. Evidently God made known to Abel that the sacrifice of a life would be acceptable from him, and in this way showed that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins; but we have no reason to assume that Abel understood that a perfect man would at some future time “die a ransom for every man.”

These sacrifices which were offered intelligently to God by those with whom He had dealings were, in a measure, acceptable as indications of a great sacrifice still future; but none or all of them fully typified the great ransom—the equivalent or purchase price for a perfect man.

All of God’s dealings with mankind center around the ransom. All the Old Testament sacrifices and the Mosaic law covenant arrangements indicated that there was a necessity for the shedding of blood; but in all of these there was evidently a basic arrangement back of each, showing that because of this arrangement or understanding, men might approach God with sacrifices. The ransom is not clearly shown in the Old Testament; and the word “ransom,” with one of its New Testament meanings, appears but once, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave.” (Hosea 13:14.) In other Old Testament passages the word “ransom” has the primary meaning of a covering. Apparently, the ransom is especially a matter between the heavenly Father and the heavenly Son; and it was not appropriate that it should be made known to even the Lord’s people in advance. The various sacrifices of the Old Testament and the priestly work seem to be based upon something back of them all—the ransom which was yet to be accomplished by Jesus. The offering of Isaac upon the altar seems to come as near to being a type of the ransom as anything in the Old Testament; and yet it lacks much of being a complete type—of showing fully the offering of a life to purchase the release of one whose life was forfeited, or “a life for a life.”

The great pyramid in Egypt seems to be referred to in the Bible as the stone witness which would corroborate the Lord’s written word “in that day”—the present time. Its downward passage, ending in the subterranean pit, seems to represent the downward course of mankind for 6,000 years, ending in the great time of trouble—the utter ruin of all man’s hopes of raising himself out of his descending condition. The upward passages represent the various hopes given by God for relief from the fall. The first ascending

passage, extending from the descending passages to the level of the Queen's chamber, corresponds in length with the period of the operation of the law covenant and seems to represent the hope of life contained in that covenant, based upon the keeping of the law. However, the fifteen-foot granite plug, at the very entrance to this first ascending passage, effectually blocked the way and prevented any one from going up to the Queen's chamber by that passage. St. Paul, writing after the prize of the law covenant was carried away by Christ, said: "The law made no one perfect; but the entering in of a better hope did." "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be made perfect." "There is none righteous, no, not one." Jesus was not made perfect by the law; but the law attested his perfection and made it manifest. And St. Paul says the law was the schoolmaster of the Jews (and any others who might profit by observing their experience in endeavoring to obtain righteousness by their own works) to bring them to Christ. Even the entrance to the ascending passage was covered by a stone so cleverly inserted that, although people had access to the downward passage for perhaps 2,000 years, no one ever knew of any upward passages. About 820 A. D., Al Mamoun, an Arabian caliph, knowing the tradition that the pyramid contained vast treasures, and that there was an entrance on the north side, cut an opening and intercepted the descending passage. While thus working, the stone covering the entrance to the ascending passage fell down and revealed what had not been known before—that there was a system of upward passages. The only real hope of the salvation become known when Jesus "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

The fact that the law covenant does not contain the teaching of the ransom is illustrated by the fact that the opening of the well seems to represent the ransom and that the well is a passage entirely distinct and separate from the first ascending passage. The mouth of the well seems to represent the resurrection of Jesus—"from the lowest hell"; and the lower opening of the well is far down on the descending passage. Jesus did not bring salvation or accomplish the ransom through the law; but apart from it in a sense; and the law covenant voiced divine approval. When Jesus was raised from the dead, He did not open the way to restitution at once, but opened the way to the high calling, illustrated by the grand gallery in the pyramid, which runs upward to the King's chamber—the grandest part of the pyramid. When the high calling shall have been closed, then the work of restitution will begin, as represented by the horizontal passage to the Queen's chamber.

There are thirty-eight other pyramids in Egypt, which are presumably copies of the great pyramid. Most of them have a system of descending passages corresponding, in large measure, to the descending passage of the great pyramid; but none of them have any upward passages. These may represent the so-called great religions of the world, all of which recognize mankind's troubles and the need of some release from them; but none of which offer any real hope. Most of them teach that man can save himself in some way, by some processes of evolution, reincarnation, good thinking, good living, or what not. The idea of the necessity of a substitutionary sacrifice seems repugnant to men in general;

and the cross of Christ is now as much of a stumbling block as it was nineteen centuries ago. Most of these religions seek to obtain some comfort from a false system of reasoning which denies the full extent of the curse and claims that man does not really die at all, but very likely lives in a better condition. Some of them, probably to enforce obedience to various kinds of priesthoods, threaten their votaries with eternal torment if they do not render willing obedience and subscribe freely to the funds of their sect. Several religions have added to this a kind of purgatory; while the Mohammedans speak of seven hells. Perhaps the Mohammedans are as zealous votaries of their religion as any in the world. However, the Christian religion is not based upon fear. The Apostle Paul says: "The love of Christ constraineth us." Most of the evangelists still believe that it is the dread of God that converts people, and they seek to make Him as terrible as possible.

The divine law required an eye for an eye, a life for a life. The scriptures explain that the first man was perfect and it was through Adam that sin entered the world and death by sin, and so, by heredity, death passed upon all men. Since death is the wages of sin, and all other troubles are incidental to it, it necessarily follows that any remedy which does not remove the death penalty must be a failure. Various expedients were permitted by God, so that it might be finally manifest that redemption was beyond the reach of the race, without divine aid. The angelic effort before the flood failed, as did also all gentile religions, philosophy, laws, etc., as well as the patriarchal dispensation, the law covenant with its atonement sacrifices, the moral teachings of the prophets and Jewish poets and philosophers. When the race was without help, in due time God sent forth His son, made of a woman, to accomplish the work of redemption. It is manifest that good thinking could not cancel the death penalty. It did not do it for the ancient worthies, who were good men, but did not escape death.

The ransom was arranged in Heaven; and the atonement was made there. St. Paul says that for the joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross, disregarding the shame and is now set down at the right hand of the Father. It was evidently in conformity with this arrangement that Jesus laid aside the glory he had with the Father, and though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich. He was born into the world, not a materialized or incarnated heavenly being, but a human child. "The Word *was made flesh*, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory, as of the only begotten of the Father." (John 1:14.) Hebrews 10 speaks of God preparing him a body for the suffering of death. This was the second step in the preparing of that body. When he was 30 years of age—a developed man at his majority—the body was fully prepared. In harmony with his pre-human arrangement, Jesus did not hesitate to carry out his contract; but the record is that when he began to be about 30 years of age, He came to John at Jordan to be baptized. The price of obedience to God was his death as a man. The law covenant promised life to all who would keep its arrangements. However, Jesus did not come to the earth to remain as a man; but He came for the definite purpose of redeeming mankind by offering a perfect human life as a

substitutionary sacrifice for the first man. He said: “My flesh I give for the life of the world.” “The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.” “No man taketh My life from Me; I have power to lay it down and I have power to receive it again. This power I have received from My Father.” Life is sweet to all, no matter on what plane; and since Jesus willingly laid down his perfect, unforfeited life to accomplish the work of ransoming mankind, this continued the meritorious work begun when He agreed to leave Heaven and undertake it.

No one can do a work for God unless permitted to do so; and so Jesus could not have taken upon himself the work of the priesthood unless he had been invited by God to do so. Adam was justly condemned and therefore God could not be required to accept a ransom as a substitute for him. However, Jesus explains that God sent His son into the world on purpose to be the savior of the world; so that when he was found in fashion as a man, he had a perfect right to offer himself to God as a ransom, in harmony with God’s own plan. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16.) If God shall permit any one to do a work for him, He will suitably reward him. “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love.” God not only raised Jesus to life, and did not only raise him to his former glory as the Logos, but gave him added glory—and gave to him to have life in himself.

When Jesus offered himself at Jordan, the Father anointed him with the Holy Spirit and begot him to the divine nature. From that time onward the old creature was dead and he was a new creature—the head of The Christ. When he finished his course in death, he was raised a divine being, highly exalted above every name that is named, possessing rights which God gave to him to be a divine being, and still having to his credit unforfeited merit and human life rights.

When Adam came under the penalty, he forfeited life and life rights and also suffered the dying processes for 930 years, until his soul was poured out in death. When Jesus took his place, he laid down his life and gradually poured out his soul unto death, being touched with a feeling of humanity’s infirmities thus being qualified to be a merciful and faithful high priest in the future. Though he laid down his life, he did not give his life rights; though the giving of his life implied that at some time, in order to complete the ransom work, he would turn over those life rights to the human race, whose life rights had been forfeited by Father Adam.

These life rights are to be the value consideration of the new covenant, which will make it effective in bringing back the world of mankind to full life rights at the close of the millennial reign of Christ. The new covenant is not yet in operation. If Jesus had turned the life rights over to Justice, the race would have been turned over to him at once and the restitutionary work would have begun then. Nearly 1,900 years have passed, and death

has a stronger hold upon the world than ever. The only conclusion, then, is that Jesus has not yet redeemed or ransomed the world. He is evidently waiting until their six days of labor under the curse have been fully accomplished. The six days have now ended and we believe the transition is in process of accomplishment, and that the new covenant will soon be mediated.

The reason that Jesus came nearly nineteen centuries in advance of the time for the sealing of the new covenant with his precious blood is that it was the Father's intention that he should bring with him many sons to glory. These do not receive the life rights. If they did, it would be proper for them to receive restitution. The apostle says that Jesus appeared in the presence of God for us; and another apostle says that he stands there, not as our mediator, but as our advocate. In speaking of the benefits which accrue to the Church, St. Paul uses the word "impute" and indicates that the life rights are not given to us, but that an imputation of merit is made to the Church—corresponding to a credit, which gives them a basis upon which to serve God. This credit gives us justification by faith when we make a consecration of our hearts to the Lord, based upon faith in the redeemer and the whole plan of salvation. Any who cannot exercise sufficient faith, cannot, of course enter this class. Those who do exercise faith are accepted as joint-sacrifices with Christ—not as parts of the ransom-price, which are accrued value from the offering of the life of a perfect man who was not under the, penalty of death.

Jesus' work had three phases—his humiliation and sacrifice, producing the ransom-price; his offering himself to die, thus showing himself worthy of being a priest between God and men, as typified in Leviticus 8: his death as a sin-offering, as shown in the type of the bullock of Leviticus 16. Because of his offering himself as a priest and as a sin-offering, and appearing in Heaven on behalf of the Church, those who willingly and gladly partake of the benefits of such offering by faith now, are privileged to share with him in a sin atonement work, known as the sin-offering. These are said to die with Christ as a part of his sin-offering sacrifice. (Rom. 6:2, 3, 10.) They must first be cleansed and accepted as members of the high priest's body. They are then no longer in the flesh, but in the spirit—new creatures in Christ Jesus, not of the world, even as He was not of the world. The whole Gospel Age is set apart for the work of finding, sealing, perfecting and finishing the work of selecting this people for his name. Acts 15:14, 17 indicates that the work of blessing the gentiles, or the "residue of men," must wait until this work is accomplished. In the meantime the merit of Jesus is in a measure involved as providing a covering—a temporary robe of righteousness for the Body of Christ while still imperfect because of the flesh.

The sin-offering is the means by which the ransom work becomes available in the real uplifting of the world of mankind from the fall. The class thus selected will be sharers with Jesus in the work of mediating the new covenant and making its blessings and rewards available to the whole world of mankind in a way which will take cognizance of

their weaknesses and make it possible for them to receive blessings for every effort put forth toward righteousness. The new covenant with its able and merciful mediator priest will bless every effort put forth toward righteousness, and each blessing will lead on toward perfection and restitution.

The term ransom includes not only the undergoing of the penalty of death by the perfect man, thus procuring the ransom-price, and it includes not only the blessing of the church, but includes the blessing and uplifting of the world of mankind from the fall, as the prophet said: “I will ransom them from the power of the grave.”

When the ransom work is complete, all the evil effects coming down to mankind from Adam’s sin, suffering and death, will be completely obliterated through the work of Christ; and any who do go into the second death will go there because of deliberate, willful sin, and because they turned their backs upon God and righteousness. The knowledge of good and evil had been known only to God throughout the ages of eternity and, apparently he only decided to make it known to others when he began the human race. When he placed the trees “good for food” in the garden, he placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the center of the garden, and placed a prohibition upon the eating of its fruit—apparently for a time. The very fact that he placed it there seems to indicate that the time had come when he decided that not only would mankind soon know good and evil, but apparently all his intelligent creatures would know good and evil. Prior to that all had known only good. When Adam partook of the fruit, his eyes were opened; and the report is that the Lord said, “The man is become as one of us [as a god] to know good and evil.” But in learning the evil, he came under the penalty of death—“dying thou shalt die.” God intended to permit the human race to experience the evil for 6,000 years, and that then He would suppress the force of evil and cause men to know good through the righteous reign of Christ. The lesson is plenty long enough in both ways that any and every intelligent person will fully know the difference and be able to choose. If, after a full experience, some will not turn to righteousness, even when they know well that it is the only way to obtain lasting life, God will decide that they are no better than natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed; and such will die the second death as cumberers of the ground. Another figure represents them as the refuse of mankind to be burned in the valley of Hinnom outside of the city, for fear of the contagion they might introduce, tending toward unrighteousness.

Those who are privileged to suffer with Christ are said to be in the school of Christ; and St. Paul tells us that these not only have the sincere milk of the word, but that in the same word there is strong meat, which all are to hope to use and be able to assimilate, which will enable them to know both good and evil. It is necessary that these shall know the underlying principles of good and evil, because they are being trained in this school of Christ to be judges and kings in the earth and to reign with Christ during the period of his kingdom. Jesus said in Revelation 2:7: “To him that overcometh will I grant to eat of the

TREE OF LIFE, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” The Church class are in the midst of evil surroundings, and have the motions of sin in their own flesh, and have a daily battle against weaknesses within and without, and against the adversary and the world as well. These have every opportunity to observe and experience evil. In the Lord’s gracious dealings with them they have the opportunity of observing good; and in His wonderful, exceeding great and precious promises regarding the future, they see more and more of the hidden springs of God’s love and goodness; and every day, and many times a day, they are learning to turn from evil, and cleave to the good. They are learning how to discern good and evil by principle, so that they do not need to ask any one else if such a thing is wrong or right. They are eating of the tree of the knowledge of good evil under divine blessing, and are being prepared to be divine beings, knowing the principles of good and evil something similar to the way God knew good and evil before evil ever came into existence, and thus qualified to judge the world.

Those of this class are to be the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb. These are to be partakers of the divine nature; they shall see Jesus as he is. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” “What manner of persons ought we to be!”

Question 74—1909 Convention Report, Page 120.

Question—Will earthly records to deeds to property be recognized at all in the Millennial Age after the time of trouble?

Answer: It is very difficult to determine to what extent a title-deed to property will have value after the time of trouble, because we do not know to what extent the records will be destroyed. It is very difficult to speak about a matter which is so obscure, and of which there is no record in the scriptures. Our supposition is that after the introduction of the Millennial age matters will go on in much the same way as before, but the world will be in a paralyzed condition, all beaten and sore, because of the great trouble. Our Lord spoke of this through the prophet, saying, “Be still and know that I am God.” That will be the first lesson for the world to learn. It will be a severe but a very valuable lesson for the outside nations. We understand that death will continue to reign in a measure and that the only place that life and restitution will be manifest in the world will be in the lives of the nation of Israel under the New Covenant. It will still be true and always be true that, “He that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son hath not life.” The heathen nations that do not fall in line with the Heavenly Kingdom will be barred to the special blessings that are coming under the New Covenant to the Covenanted people of Israel...