

# A Ransom for All

*“This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 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 2:3-6

## **FOR MANY YEARS, THE**

Dawn has published on its back cover six brief statements of faith well-known to Bible Students the world over, entitled, “To Us the Scriptures Clearly Teach.” The third of these statements reads: The basis of hope for the church and the world lies in the fact that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, “a ransom for all,” and will be “the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” “in due time.”—

Heb. 2:9; John 1:9; I Tim. 2:5,6

As we enter the year 2024, it has been one-hundred and fifty years since the time that many sincere students of the Bible believe marked the beginning of the ending phase, or “harvest,” of the present Gospel Age. (Matt. 13:24-30,36-43) It has been during this harvest period that the Bible’s teaching concerning the “ransom for all” has been brought into

such clear focus as was not previously understood since the days of the apostles. Indeed, the ransom for all is the central hub upon which all the other spokes of divine Truth spring forth. With this in mind, we believe it is appropriate to review in the ensuing pages this key element of Christian teaching as found in the Bible.

## **THE DIVINE PURPOSE**

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, the Scriptures declare. (Matt. 9:13; Luke 9:56; 19:10; John 3:17) His coming was in keeping with the purpose of his Heavenly Father, the Creator, hence our text refers to God as being “our Saviour.” God’s plan for the salvation of the world through his only begotten Son, Jesus, was a manifestation of his love for sinners, for we read that God “so loved the world” that he gave his Son to be the Redeemer, with the provision that all who believe on him “should not perish, but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16

The basis upon which salvation is brought to the sin-cursed and dying race through Jesus is the fact that in death he became a substitute for the forfeited life of father Adam. “As in Adam all die,” wrote Paul, “even so in Christ shall all be made alive”—that is, be given the opportunity to attain everlasting life. (I Cor. 15:22) This substitutional arrangement is referred to in our text as a “ransom,” or, as it means in the Greek, “a price to correspond.” Jesus’ sacrifice of his life on behalf of Adam and the dying race was, indeed, a price to correspond; for just as Adam was a perfect human being before he sinned, so Jesus was made flesh—flesh that was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners”

—and which he gave “for the life of the world.”—  
John 6:51; Heb. 7:26

In I Timothy 4:10 Paul speaks of God as the “Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” In this passage of Scripture the apostle mentions a point which at first might seem strange. He says that “we both labour and suffer reproach” because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men. Why should anyone be reproached and caused to suffer for believing in such a God?

The apostle does not provide the background meaning of this statement, but evidently the suffering and reproach to which he refers came from those who believed in one or more of the many false gods worshiped by the people at that time. Under the influence of prejudice and superstition, these worshipers of false gods resented the Truth concerning a true and living God of love—a real benefactor of the people, who loves the world and has made a provision of salvation for all who believe.

Just as pagan worshipers reproached those who believed in the true and living God in Paul’s day, so we are reproached today. The Gospel of salvation through Christ has been distorted to the point that salvation means to be rescued from the torments of a creedal hell, with only a few in all the ages fortunate enough to escape. The bearers of the true Gospel of love—those who believe in and teach that God is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe—are reproached by those who worship the torment deity, and are deemed as opposers of Christianity.

However, thanks be to God that we have learned to know him as the Savior of all men, and especially

those who believe! Those who have come to know this glorious Truth are glad to lay down their lives heralding forth his praises, for he has called them “out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (I Pet. 2:9) We could not have a better vocation, a better cause for which to live and die, than that of magnifying the name of the true God of love.

Perhaps we have not appreciated this privilege as much as we should. Have we tended to be somewhat apologetic when some accuse us of being teachers of a “second chance”? What is there about teaching a second chance—which in reality is the first real chance for most—that we should hesitate to declare? Indeed, Adam sinned willfully, but he lacked experience. God will give him another opportunity, with the added benefit of hundreds of years of experience with the awful effects of sin. It is God’s love which has provided for salvation through the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Why should we not glory in the fact that our Heavenly Father is a loving, merciful, and forgiving God?

## **THROUGH THE RANSOM**

In addition to being a God of love, our Heavenly Father is also just—though not vengeful. Through Jesus, he has made a provision whereby he can “be just, and the justifier” of all who believe. (Rom. 3:26) Surely we are honored in having the privilege of knowing such a God, whose love and justice work in perfect harmony. How we rejoice in this privilege in advance of the time when the world will know him, and while many today are still in spiritual darkness.

Paul says of our God that he “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the

truth.” The great Truth which the apostle says all shall eventually learn centers in “the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all,” and who, as a result, will be the “mediator between God and men.” This harmonizes with John 1:9, where we read that Jesus is that “true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” So while we rejoice that we have come to a knowledge of the Truth, our joy is increased in the realization that ultimately, when the ransom sacrifice of Jesus is fully “testified in due time,” all mankind will learn to know and love God. As Jesus said in prayer to his Father, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”—John 17:3

Paul’s phrase, “Who will have all men to be saved,” does not indicate “universal salvation” within the accepted meaning of that expression. It does not mean that God’s love will save everlastingly every individual who has ever been born. The remainder of the expression clarifies its meaning: “and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (I Tim. 2:4) A majority of Adam’s race has gone down into death wholly or partially ignorant of the provision of life made by God through Jesus. These must be awakened from death—saved in this sense of the word—in order that they might become acquainted with the great and saving Truth of the ransom for all.

“Whosoever believeth in him [the Son of man, Jesus himself] should not perish, but have everlasting life,” declared the Master. (John 3:13-17) How relatively few there have been who have had a full opportunity to believe in him! However, this has been taken into consideration in God’s plan, by

making the provision to rescue mankind from the sleep of death that they might then have an opportunity to hear and believe and be saved eternally. It is this fact that the apostle emphasizes when he says that the great Truth of the ransom for all is to be “testified in due time.”

## **ACCEPTABLE TIME FOR SACRIFICE**

It was not the due time during the world before the Flood for the people to learn about God’s provision of salvation through Christ, nor was this great Truth testified to the people during Old Testament times except in veiled prophetic language. From New Testament times forward, the Gospel has been preached worldwide as a witness. (Matt. 24:14) However, it has come far short of reaching all, and the blinding influences of Satan, the “god of this world,” have prevented the vast majority from appreciating the full scope of God’s love and the provision for life he has made through the ransom for all.—II Cor. 4:4

The coming Messianic Age, during which the “restitution [Greek: restoration] of all things” will be accomplished, is the “due time” when the knowledge of the ransom will be testified to all. (Acts 3:20,21) During this present Gospel Age another feature of God’s plan is being developed; that is, the call and development of the church of Christ. These are called to “glory and honour and immortality” and to be “joint-heirs” with Christ. (Rom. 2:7; 8:17) Here also, it is the ransom which constitutes the basis for this glorious hope.

One of the conditions upon which we may live and reign with Christ is that we suffer and die with

him. Paul speaks of this as being “baptized into his death,” and as being “planted together in the likeness of his death.” (Rom. 6:3,5) When we question what he means by the likeness of Jesus’ death, the apostle answers that Jesus died unto sin, and that “likewise” we should reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin.—vss. 10,11

What does the apostle mean by reckoning ourselves to be dead unto sin? Simply that we are authorized, through our faith in the merit of Jesus’ shed blood, to count ourselves as offering an acceptable sacrifice to God. In verse seven the apostle explains that those who thus offer themselves to God are planted together in the likeness of Jesus’ death and “justified from sin.” (*Revised Version*) This means that they are not dying as sinners in Adam, for the blood of Christ frees them from condemnation; they are dying, rather, sacrificially, as Jesus died.

This wonderful arrangement whereby the followers of Jesus may join in his sacrificial work related to the salvation of the world in no way changes the fact that only the ransom sacrifice of Jesus releases mankind from sin. His ransom sacrifice is the basis of the entire arrangement. In fact, it is only through the ransom that we are authorized to “reckon” ourselves to be dead unto sin.

Thus we see that there is no sin-canceling merit in the sacrifice of the church. However, when the Lord authorizes us to reckon it as being part of the “better sacrifices” of this Gospel Age, we should honor him by doing so, and seek faithfully to keep our offering of sacrifice and service on the altar until it is fully consumed. (Heb. 9:23) It is this thought that Paul stresses saying, “I beseech you therefore,

brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”—Rom. 12:1

Jesus “tasted death for every man,” declares the apostle. (Heb. 2:9) However, this alone does not complete the work of reconciling the lost race to God. If nothing more were done, the living generations would go on in sin and continue to die, while those in the tomb would remain there. It was necessary in the divine arrangement that a knowledge of this ransom for all should be made known to those for whom it was provided.

First, Jesus was raised from the dead and appeared “in the presence of God for us.” (Heb. 9:24) The apostle states the same thought in another way, saying that Christ was “raised again for our justification.” (Rom. 4:25) Why should we, the church class, be justified? It is in order that we might present our bodies an acceptable sacrifice and be planted together in the likeness of Jesus’ death. This is not for the purpose of adding anything to the ransom, but in order that each one in the true church might prove to be in full harmony with the divine program of love for the human race, and to be trained to share with Jesus in the future work of enlightening and blessing the world.

It is in this way that the benefits of Christ’s ransom will reach the world. The value of the ransom is first used to make the church’s joint-sacrifice with Jesus acceptable, and when this sacrifice is complete and the church is glorified with the Lord, together they will be the means through which the offer of salvation will reach the remainder of mankind. How will the benefits of the ransom be made

available to all? They will come through the enlightenment of the people in order that they might have an opportunity to believe with a full and complete understanding of God's principles of truth and righteousness.

The apostle asked, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" (Rom. 10:14) The merit of the ransom is available at the present time only for those who hear, believe, and obey the true Gospel message. Thus it becomes evident that the church has a very vital part in the future work of mankind's reconciliation—not by providing the ransom, but by being coworkers in the divine arrangement whereby, on the basis of imparted knowledge, the benefits of the ransom will be available to the people. It was in keeping with this divine arrangement that Jesus prayed for the oneness of the church with himself—that full oneness which will be attained in the "first resurrection," "that the world may believe."—Rev. 20:5,6; John 17:21

The due time for testifying the knowledge of the ransom to all mankind, both the living and all those who have died, each one being raised from the grave, will not be until the mediatorial kingdom of Christ is established. Now, however, is the "acceptable year [time]" for the followers of Jesus to lay down their lives as joint-sacrificers with him. (Luke 4:19) Paul also speaks of this acceptable time, or "day of salvation," in II Corinthians 6:2, where he quotes from Isaiah 49:8. Turning to this passage we find it to be one of God's promises to establish a covenant with the people, to reconcile them to himself. Paul's application of this promise shows that the church is to be used, together with

Christ, as the servants of God in establishing this covenant.

This entire arrangement is made possible through the ransom for all. Truly it constitutes the basis of hope for both the church and the world. What a blessed hope it is for both! For the church it is a hope of glory and honor and immortality; and for the world, it is the prospect of restitution to human perfection on the earth.

As we have seen, the hope of the church is that she may share in the work of restoring the world. “I will preserve thee,” says the Lord, “and give thee for a covenant of the people, to raise up the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages; saying to them that are bound [in the prison house of death], Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves.” (Isa. 42:6; 49:8,9, *RV*) It will be in the fulfillment of this promise that “the ransom for all” will be indeed testified to all “in due time.”  
—I Tim. 2:6 ■