

The Blood of Atonement

*“We have an advocate with the Father,
Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the
propitiation [atonement] for our sins:
and not for ours only, but also for the
sins of the whole world.”*
—I John 2:1,2

The Bible clearly teaches that God’s plan of salvation for the human race is based upon the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is a fundamental doctrine of the Bible that no one can be saved from sin and its penalty death except through belief in Jesus as the Redeemer and Savior of the world. This great truth is presented to us from different standpoints in order that we might understand more clearly just what it means to us and will yet mean to all mankind. Here are a few of the Bible’s references to this important teaching.

Jesus said, “The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” Then he added, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink

his blood, ye have no life in you.”—John 6:51,53

“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 Tim. 2:5,6

“The blood of Jesus Christ ... cleanseth us from all sin.”—I John 1:7

“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Rom. 6:23

“As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”—I Cor. 15:22

The various expressions in these and other texts of Scripture pertaining to the atoning work of Jesus Christ are freely used by all professing Christians, although oftentimes seemingly no effort is made to explain what they actually mean. The word “blood,” for example, is repeatedly employed to give emphasis to the atoning work of the Savior, although there are probably few who, if asked, could give a clear-cut explanation of just what they mean when, for example, they speak of being cleansed by the blood.

REDEMPTION—FROM WHAT TO WHAT

Basically important to a correct understanding of the whole subject of atonement is a discernment of what the Bible means

by the expression, "The wages of sin is death."—Rom. 6:23

The atonement furnished by Jesus Christ provides for a release from the punishment inflicted upon the human race because of sin. Unless, therefore, we properly understand the nature of that punishment, it would be impossible to grasp clearly the scriptural doctrine of atonement.

For instance, Paul wrote that Jesus gave himself "a ransom for all." Here the thought is that Jesus became our substitute in death. The Greek word translated "ransom" literally means a "corresponding price." Now, if the divine penalty for sin is torment in a hell of fire forever, it would mean that Jesus must suffer torment forever in order to pay that penalty or to be a substitute for sinners.

However, the divine penalty for sin is death, not torment. Unfortunately the word death has been explained by many as separation from God and incarceration in a burning hell. There is no scriptural authority for this definition. Death in the Scriptures means exactly the same as it does in the dictionary, which is absence of life. Solomon wrote, "The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything." (Eccles. 9:5) Speaking of one who dies, David wrote, "In that very day his thoughts perish."—Ps. 146:4

The first time the penalty for sin is mentioned in the Bible it is declared to be death. To Adam God said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2:17) When our first parents did partake of the forbidden fruit God said to them, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."—Gen. 3:19

This was the full limit of the penalty—a returning to the dust. Nothing more was said to our first parents concerning the result of their sins, except to outline the incidental sorrows they would experience prior to death. The final consummation of the penalty upon Adam is mentioned in Genesis 5:5, where we read, "And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died."

Ecclesiastes 12:7 has been misconstrued to mean that man possesses an immortal "spirit" which cannot die, and which at the death of the body returns to God. We quote, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." The key to a proper understanding of this text is the word "return." Both the "dust" of which the body is composed and the "spirit" return. This means that both revert to the pre-living condition.

The word "spirit" as used in this text is a translation of a Hebrew word which elsewhere

in the Old Testament is translated “breath.” It is used to define the God-given power of life inherent in the breath. In his sermon on Mars’ Hill, Paul said that in God “we live, and move, and have our being.”—Acts 17:28

At death the body returns to the dust. That should be obvious to all, and the text we quoted states that the God-given power to live, the spirit or breath, also returns. It came from God as the Giver of all life, and therefore is properly described as returning to him.

Many speak of the inherent immortality of man as though it were a viewpoint clearly set forth in the Word of God, but it will surprise some to learn that not once does the Bible refer to man as being immortal. The expression, “immortal soul,” or any equivalent thereof, does not appear anywhere in the Bible.

According to the Scriptures, God alone originally possessed immortality. It was conferred upon Jesus at the time of his resurrection, and it is promised to his followers as a reward for their faithfulness in following in his footsteps of self-sacrifice. Paul speaks of these as seeking “glory and honor and immortality.” One does not seek after that which he already possesses.—Rom. 2:7; I Tim. 6:15,16

Recognizing, then, that when the Bible states the wages of sin to be death it means the absence of life, it becomes clear that the “salvation” provided by the atoning work of Jesus Christ is the opportunity of being released from this condition. The ultimate result of this program of atonement is beautifully stated in Revelation 21:4 where we are told of a time when “there shall be no more death.”

ALL DIE IN ADAM

The question naturally arises, How was it possible for one man, Jesus, to redeem the entire human race? The Scriptures declare that he “tasted death for every man,” and also explain how this was possible. The Apostle Paul wrote, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” (I Cor. 15:22) The original penalty for sin was pronounced upon Adam, and it has only been by heredity, and because his descendants were born sinners, that they have shared that penalty. “Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”—Rom. 5:12

God held Adam responsible as the head of the race because he was created perfect, and in the divine image. Therefore, although human, he was fully capable of obeying divine law. Jesus, therefore, the perfect

man, the one who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” was an exact corresponding price for father Adam.—Heb. 7:26

Jesus, like Adam, also contained a potential human race in his loins; so, when he went into death to redeem Adam, he also provided redemption for all of Adam’s race who were yet in his loins when he sinned. Thus we see clearly and simply how the scriptural thought of a ransom, or corresponding price, is involved in Jesus’ atoning work.

The ransom feature of the divine plan of salvation thus is seen to be an expression of God’s justice. This principle was stated by God in the Law which he gave to Israel—a “tooth for tooth,” a “life for life.” (Exod. 21:23,24) Only Jesus could provide this corresponding price, for all the children of Adam were sinners and imperfect. The Prophet David wrote, “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.”—Ps. 49:7

WHY ITS NECESSITY

The tendency today is to depart from this scriptural concept of atonement for sin. Modern human wisdom takes the position that a loving God would not demand a blood sacrifice for sin. It is claimed that

such a thought is revolting to enlightened thinkers of this present age.

The rejection of this scriptural philosophy of atonement for sin is, in effect, a denial of the great foundation truths of the Bible. A companion unbelief also held by these is that the Genesis account of creation is merely an allegory, that man is not a direct creation of God and in the divine image.

Hand in hand with this is, of course, a denial of the fall of man. It is insisted that man is evolving, not falling, and does not need atonement, but merely greater liberty to rise above his present limitations. All of this is flattering to the human ego, but it is a flat denial of practically the entire Word of God, including Jesus' own teachings.

When we adjust our thinking to the viewpoint set forth in the Word of God, there is no difficulty in understanding why God demanded a ransom for Adam and his race before they could be released from the penalty of sin. Having created Adam perfect, and capable of obeying his law, God had a right to demand obedience. This we will all concede.

The Creator also had a right to determine the nature of the penalty which should be inflicted upon the disobedient. Adam enjoyed life only by the grace of God.

The Creator was under no obligation to create man and give him life, therefore he was under no obligation to keep him alive. His intention to do so, as implied in his command to multiply and fill the earth, was a further expression of his grace; and his insistence that in order to enjoy this continuance of his grace man must obey divine law was a simple expression of divine justice.

The question might arise, could not God have manifested his great love toward man by releasing him from death without a ransom? He could not do this without going contrary to his own principles, and if God did this, we could have no confidence in any of his promises. If he were to forgive the sinner without a just recompense for his sins, how could one be sure that God might not again change his mind?

In what manner, then, does the atoning work of Jesus assure us of God's integrity? Did not God himself make this arrangement? Is it not an expression of divine love? If this be true, could God not have expressed his love toward the sinful and dying race without the necessity of Jesus' death? In what manner does this prove the unchangeableness of God in the execution of his judgments?

“GOD SO LOVED”

One of the simplest and most direct scriptural answers to this question is found in John 3:16. This familiar text informs us that “God so loved the world” that he gave his only begotten Son to die for humankind. While it is quite impossible for us fully to comprehend the nature of God, we gather from this expression that the Father’s gift of his Son was a very costly one, and that he was willing to meet this cost in order that “he might be just, and be the justifier” of all who come unto him through Jesus and because of his atoning work.—Rom. 3:26

We know that the atoning work of Jesus involved much suffering, which he voluntarily and gladly endured. But his Heavenly Father suffered also. The work of atonement was costly to him even as it was to his Son; and on the part of both it was an expression of divine love.

It was necessary that divine justice be satisfied before man could be released from death, but divine love provided the price of atonement. Thus God’s integrity remained inviolate, yet a way was provided for the sinner’s release from the penalty of death.

JESUS, THE PERFECT ONE

The Scriptures declare that Jesus “was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14)

A “body” was prepared for him “for the suffering of death.” (Heb. 2:9; 10:5) One of the titles given to him is “the man Christ Jesus.” (I Tim. 2:5) But Jesus was not an imperfect, dying member of the human race. He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.”—Heb. 7:26

Jesus had a prehuman existence. In the first chapter of John’s Gospel he is spoken of as the “Logos,” meaning “Word,” or mouthpiece. According to the original Greek of this chapter, the Logos was “a” God, or mighty One, and was in the beginning with “The” God, that is, Jehovah, the Creator. He was the “beginning of the creation of God.”¹—Rev. 3:14

After the Logos was created, he was the active agent of God in all the creative work. “Without him was not any thing made that was made.” (John 1:3) This relationship of the Father and the Son in the work of creation is revealed by the pronoun “us,” in the expression, “Let us make man in our image.”—Gen. 1:26

It is concerning this powerful and glorious Logos that Paul writes in Philippians

¹ We will here not discuss this aspect of the subject in detail, but for those who may wish to examine it further, we recommend the booklet entitled, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. It is attainable free from Dawn Publications, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167

2:6-8: “Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.”—*Revised Standard Version*

Paul says that Jesus was “found” in human form. This suggests that for a time he was “missing” to the hosts of heaven among whom he had freely mingled as the Logos. To these he was missing from the time of the Annunciation to his birth. His transfer to earth in this manner was a miracle.

The acceptance of miracles is absolutely essential to a true belief in the divine plan of atonement. The original creation of man was a miracle. Life itself is a miracle. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, which, as we shall see, was very vital to the atonement plan, was one of the greatest of all miracles.

The Logos was miraculously transferred to earth and became a man—a perfect man—in order that he might give his flesh, his humanity, for the life of the world. Jesus did not have a member of the sinful and fallen race as his father, so he did not partake of sin and imperfection. But make

no mistake: the babe that was born in Bethlehem was not God incarnate in flesh. It was the Son of God "made flesh." When he grew to manhood's estate he prayed to his Heavenly Father, and he was certainly not praying to himself.

True, Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14:9) That was because he was in the mental and moral "image of God," even as Adam was when created. Jesus emphasized, "My Father is greater than I." (John 14:28) Those who saw Jesus witnessed a marvelous manifestation of the glorious characteristics of God, but they did not see God in person, for no man can look upon him and live.—Exod. 33:20

"FOR THE SUFFERING OF DEATH"

In Psalm 8:4, God is represented as "visiting" mankind. The Scriptures reveal that Jesus is the one who makes this visit on behalf of God, and as an expression of divine love on behalf of the human race which originally had been created "a little lower than the angels," and given a dominion over the earth.—vss. 4-8

In the New Testament the Apostle Paul refers to this prophecy, and then adds, "We see not yet all things put under him [man]. But we see Jesus, who was made a little

lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”—Heb. 2:6-9

Here we have two important thoughts brought to our attention. One is that the atoning work of Jesus is designed by God to make possible the restoration of man to his lost home and dominion here on earth. The other great truth is that in order to accomplish this divine purpose of his visit to earth, it was essential that Jesus “taste death for every man.”

Just as the penalty for sin which was imposed upon Adam and through him upon his children was death, so Jesus must die in order to set that judgment aside. He could not redeem man by the good example of his life, nor could he do it by showing us how to die for a good cause. The intrinsic value of Jesus’ faithful ministry was in the fact that he “poured out his soul unto death: and ... was numbered with the transgressors; and ... bare the sin of many.”—Isa. 53:12

Other statements concerning the basis of Jesus’ atoning work are: “He was cut off out of the land of the living.” He was led “as a lamb to the slaughter.” “Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.” (Isa. 53:7,8,10) Jesus’ “soul” was his whole

living being. This is the meaning of the Hebrew word in the Old Testament from which the word “soul” is translated.

In Psalm 16:10 we have a prophetic expression of Jesus’ hope of being raised from the dead. It reads, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” The word “hell” in this prophecy of Jesus’ resurrection is from the Hebrew word *sheol*, which is the only Old Testament word translated “hell.” It applies to the condition or state of death. The Scriptures explain that it is a state of unconsciousness, saying, “There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave [*sheol*], whither thou goest.”—Eccles. 9:10

Since the “wages of sin is death,” all go into this state of death, *sheol*, the Bible hell. That is why it was necessary for Jesus to go into *sheol*, the same state of death, in order to take the sinner’s place. It was not merely his body that died, but his whole being, his soul—“He poured out his soul unto death.”

When God sentenced man to death he withdrew his favor from him. In order for Jesus to take the sinner’s place fully it was necessary that he experience this same loss of his Father’s favor and love, which he did. On the cross he cried, “My God, my

God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46) When forsaken by his Father, Jesus quickly died.

RESURRECTION NECESSARY

As a perfect man, free from the condemnation to death which rested upon the children of Adam, Jesus had the right to continue living as a human. He died because he voluntarily laid down his life in sacrifice as a substitute for the forfeited life of Adam. He gave his flesh, his humanity, for the life of the world, and could never again enjoy life as a human.

However, God had promised to raise his Son from the dead and to empower him to complete the divine program of human redemption and restoration. Paul wrote that for the “joy that was set before him” Jesus “endured the cross, despising the shame,” and that he is now “set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2) The man Jesus died to redeem the world, and was raised to the divine nature to be the Restorer and King of those whom he redeemed.

In the Old Testament tabernacle services instituted by God through Moses, we are furnished a beautiful illustration of the meaning of the vital relationship of Jesus’ resurrection to the atonement program.

On that typical Day of Atonement, a bullock was offered in sacrifice. This pointed forward to the sacrifice of Jesus. The high priest laid his hands on the head of the bullock to denote that it represented him and was to be sacrificed in his stead.

The high priest then slew the bullock and carried its blood into the most holy of the Tabernacle and sprinkled it on the mercy seat. If he had not faithfully performed every detail of that ceremony as God had instructed, he would have died as he passed under the second veil of the Tabernacle to enter the most holy with the blood.

That, of course, was only a picture. The second veil foreshadowed the completion of the sacrificial death which would be necessary in order for Jesus to enter into the antitypical most holy, even heaven itself, the presence of God. For the high priest to pass under that veil, and to arise alive on the other side, foreshadowed the resurrection of Jesus. If the high priest had not been faithful he could not have completed this full picture of sacrificial death and the resurrection to follow.

Thus we are taught that Jesus' resurrection depended upon his faithfulness in giving his flesh for the life of the world. If God raised him from the dead it would

prove that his sacrifice was acceptable, and he could then “sprinkle” the antitypical “mercy seat” with his “blood.” This is why Paul said that the resurrection of Jesus was an “assurance unto all men”—an assurance, that is, that he had made an acceptable sin atonement and thus had provided a way of escape from death for all mankind.—Acts 17:31

The Apostle Peter clarifies this viewpoint further in his Pentecostal sermon. He certifies the fact of Jesus’ resurrection, that in fulfillment of the prophecy his “soul” had not been left in hell. Then he explains that the resurrected Jesus had returned to the heavenly courts and was now seated at the “right hand” of God.

Paul also speaks of Jesus’ return to heaven after the resurrection, and says, “Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands [those of the typical Tabernacle], which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”—Heb. 9:24

The thought here is beautifully clear. Just as the high priest of Israel entered into the most holy of the Tabernacle and sprinkled the blood of his offering on the mercy seat, so Jesus, after his resurrection, appeared in the presence of God for us. Symbolically speaking, he sprinkled his

“blood” on the antitypical mercy seat of God’s justice on behalf of his people, his footstep followers.

In the text heading this discussion, the Apostle John writes that Jesus is now our “Advocate” before the Father because he is the “propitiation”—Greek, atonement—for our sins. The merit of his sacrificed humanity makes up for our lack of righteousness; his “blood” covers our sins.

It is apparent that the blood of the Redeemer is thus referred to in a symbolic manner. Jesus did not carry his literal blood to heaven with him. In the Old Testament we read, “The life of the flesh is in the blood.” (Lev. 17:11,14) In other words, the Scriptures refer to the “blood” of Jesus as representing the merit or value of his sacrificed life. This is the basis for our reconciliation to God. Thus through the righteousness of his spilled blood, or sacrificed life, we are said to be “cleansed.”

When in the “upper room” with his disciples the night before he was crucified, Jesus referred in this symbolic manner both to his “body” and to his “blood.” It was then that he instituted the memorial of his death, which required the eating of unleavened bread and the drinking of the “cup.” He explained that the bread represented his broken body and the cup

his poured out blood. Partaking of these emblems represents our acceptance of God's grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The followers of Jesus ever since that time have continued to partake of these symbols on the appropriate occasion each year, and each time it is a fresh reminder to them of the vicarious atoning work of Jesus Christ on their behalf, without which they could have no hope of everlasting life.

A HOPE OF LIFE

The life which Christians now enjoy through Christ's atonement is upon the basis of faith. It is a hope of life. Paul wrote that through patient continuance in well-doing "we seek for [actual] glory and honor and immortality, eternal life."—Rom. 2:7

We are no longer alienated from God because of our sins, for we are covered with a "robe of righteousness"—not our own, but the righteousness of Christ, symbolized by his blood. (Isa. 61:10) Paul describes the result of this as "justification." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Then he adds, "By whom also we have access ... into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."—Rom. 5:1,2

Through the justifying power of the “blood” we have access into “this grace.” Here is a reference to a feature of the divine plan which is overlooked by the vast majority of professed Christians. Paul hints at what it is by saying that those who have entered into it now “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Elsewhere he describes this same great favor of God as “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”—Col. 1:27

It was human life here on earth that Adam lost when he disobeyed divine law. Jesus sacrificed his perfect humanity to redeem Adam and his children. The acceptance of this gift provides the opportunity to enjoy everlasting life as humans. This wonderful opportunity will be offered to all the billions of the human race during the thousand years of Christ’s kingdom. But first something else is being accomplished upon the basis of the atonement.

Those who now by faith accept God’s provision of life through Christ, and devote their lives to divine service, are invited to join Jesus in sacrificial death. They are given the opportunity of being “planted together in the likeness of his death.” (Rom. 6:5) Paul wrote, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, ... that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service.”—Rom. 12:1

When we present ourselves to the Lord in full consecration, agreeing to follow in the sacrificial footsteps of Jesus, our offering is acceptable to God upon the basis of our faith in the atoning merit of Christ's "blood." This is the purpose of our faith justification, which means that by faith we receive life through Christ, that we may offer it in acceptable sacrifice to God.

This is described by Paul as a baptism into Christ's death. Being thus baptized into his death, we become members of Christ's symbolic body. (I Cor. 12:27) This is described by Paul as being "in Christ," and he assures us that there is no condemnation for those who enjoy this favored relationship.—Rom. 8:1

Just as Jesus, in the resurrection, was highly exalted above the human nature—exalted to glory, honor, and immortality—this same reward is promised to all those who are "planted" with him in death. The promise is that if we die with him we shall live with him, and if we suffer with him we shall reign with him.—II Tim. 2:11,12

God's promises pertaining to the blessings of life which will reach the world through the atonement are associated with the covenant he made with father Abraham that through his "seed" all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Gen. 12:3; 22:18)

In Galatians 3:16 Paul identifies Jesus as being this promised “seed” of Abraham. In verses 27-29 of the same chapter he explains that all those who are “in Christ” are also counted by God as being a part of the promised “seed,” hence the future source of blessing to the world.

THE CHURCH NOW, THE WORLD LATER

It becomes clear that Christ’s work of atonement thus far has benefited only those few who through faith have become his footstep followers. However, these have not been restored to human perfection and given eternal life on earth, which is the provision made by the atonement. Instead, this restored perfection has been reckoned to them by God, and has enabled them to lay down their lives in sacrifice, to be “planted together” in the likeness of Christ’s death, that they might also be in the likeness of his resurrection.—Rom. 6:3-5

It is to these that the Apostle John referred when he wrote that Christ is a propitiation, or atonement, for “our” sins. John adds that this atonement has also been made “for the sins of the whole world.” (I John 2:2) It is a great mistake to suppose that the benefits of the atonement apply only to those who in this age accept the invitation to walk in the footsteps of Jesus by laying

down their lives in sacrifice. This arrangement on behalf of his footstep followers is merely preparatory to the fuller manifestation of God's grace through the atonement by which all mankind will be offered life during the thousand years of Christ's reign—life on the earth as humans, the same as Adam lost because of sin.

THE TWO SPRINKLINGS

We have already referred to the sacrifice of the bullock on Israel's typical day of atonement, and the fact that the blood of that bullock was sprinkled on the mercy seat in the most holy of the Tabernacle. The record of this states that this sprinkling was on behalf of the priestly family. (Lev. 16:11) This would correspond in antitype with Christ's appearance in heaven for "us," and with John's assurance that Jesus became an atonement for "our" sins.

In that typical day of atonement a goat was also sacrificed. Its blood was sprinkled upon the mercy seat, as was the blood of the bullock. This was on behalf of the "people." (Lev. 16:15,33) The sacrifice of this goat pointed forward to the sacrifice of Jesus' footstep followers. Their sacrifice is made acceptable through his blood, so in reality the sprinkling of the blood of the goat on the mercy seat would foreshadow a

second “sprinkling” of Jesus’ blood, on behalf of all the people.

The purpose and result of this will be quite different. The world will not be invited to sacrifice life in the service of God. They will be given an opportunity to accept the provisions of the atonement and upon evidence of their wholehearted desire to obey the laws of Christ’s righteous kingdom which will then be reigning in the earth, they will be restored to perfection as humans and live forever.

In a text already quoted Paul states, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Then the apostle adds, “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” (I Cor. 15:22,23) The word “coming” in this text is translated from a Greek word meaning “presence.” The reference is to Christ’s second presence on earth.

The expression “Christ the firstfruits” includes both Jesus and his church, his footstep followers. These, his brethren, are the first to be made alive. But then will follow all those who become Christ’s during the time of his kingdom.

Paul adds, “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have

put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”—I Cor. 15:24-26

Thus Paul describes the result of the completed atonement work, which is even the destruction of death itself. The rebellion against God’s law which began in the Garden of Eden, and has continued and increased through the ages, will then have been put down. The atonement of Christ having opened the way for the release of the prisoners of death, they will all have been awakened from death and given an opportunity to believe and live.

Paul wrote that it is the will of God that all shall “be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth,” and then adds that the great truth which those saved from death through the resurrection will learn is that the Man Christ Jesus gave himself “a ransom for all.” (I Tim. 2:3-6) He assures us that this will be “testified [to all] in due time.”

Thus we have brought before us the fullness of meaning contained in that precious text concerning God’s great love, the love which caused him to send his Son that “whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John

3:16) The church class is given the opportunity to believe during the present Gospel Age, but for the vast majority that opportunity will not become available until the church is completed and reigning with her Lord.

Then the knowledge of God's glory will fill the whole earth as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:9) Then the blind eyes will be opened and the deaf ears unstopped. (Isa. 35:5) Then the "veil" that is spread over all nations will be removed. (Isa. 25:6-9) Then the way will be made so plain that "wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."—Isa. 35:8

It will be then that the "ransomed of the Lord"—all those for whom Christ died—"shall return, and come to Zion [Christ and his glorified church] with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."—Isa. 35:10

This will be the consummation of God's great plan of atonement. This final result is described by Peter as "restitution," and he declares that the "times of restitution" were spoken by God by "the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."—Acts 3:20,21

There will be a few during the kingdom age who, despite the favorable opportunity

then given, will refuse to believe and obey. These will be destroyed “from among the people.” They will “perish” in what the Bible describes as the “second death.”—Acts 3:23; Rev. 20:14; 21:8

Beyond that thousand years of regeneration and restoration based upon the atonement there will be endless ages of joy and life for the restored human race. The original purpose of God in the creation of man, as stated in the Garden of Eden, will have been fulfilled, and perfect man will continue to glorify God and enjoy the blessings of life which he provided for them. ■

QUESTIONS

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How does Christ’s atonement work reveal God’s integrity?—Page 9

Explain the manner in which Jesus was “made flesh” yet was not defiled by the sin of the fallen race.—Pages 10,11

What did Paul mean when he wrote that Jesus was “found”?—Pages 11,12

Why was Jesus “made flesh,” and wherein does this differ from being incarnate in flesh?—Pages 12,13

Was it merely Jesus’ body that died on the cross?—Pages 14,15

Explain the meaning of Psalm 16:10, which reads, “Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption.”—Page 15

Why was it necessary for Jesus to be raised from the dead?—Page 16

How was his resurrection illustrated in the tabernacle services, and what part of the atonement work was illustrated by the priest sprinkling blood on the mercy seat?—Pages 16,17

When did Jesus appear in heaven for “us”?—Page 18

What is represented by the ceremonial partaking of bread and wine?—Pages 19,20

Do we now receive actual life through the atonement, or merely a hope of life?—Page 20

Why are Christians invited to walk in Jesus’ footsteps?—Pages 21,22

Who only, thus far, have been benefited by the atonement? When will the whole world be benefited?—Page 23

Will Jesus appear in the presence of God for the world, as he did for “us”?—Pages 24,25

What is the order of the resurrection resulting from the atonement?—Pages 26,27

Quote some of the promises of God which describe the blessings all mankind will yet receive through the atonement.—Page 27