

Ransom and Restitution



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in due time.” (1 Timothy 2:6)**

RANSOM AND RESTITUTION

“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 Tim. 2:5,6)

“And he [God] shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

“Whom the heaven must receive [retain] until the times of *restitution* of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:20,21)

From the outline of God’s plan as revealed in the Scriptures, it is apparent that His design for mankind is a restitution or *restoration* to the perfection and glory that were lost in the Garden of Eden through Adam’s disobedience. The strongest and most conclusive evidence on this subject is clearly seen when the extent and nature of the *Ransom* are fully appreciated. The restitution foretold by the apostles and all the “holy prophets since the world began” *must follow* the Ransom as the *just and logical sequence*. According to God’s arrangement in providing a ransom, all mankind, unless they willingly and willfully resist the saving power

of the Great Deliverer, must be delivered from the original penalty, “the bondage of corruption,” *death*; otherwise, the Ransom would not avail for all (Rom. 8:21).

Paul’s reasoning on the subject is clear and emphatic. He said, “For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord [ruler or controller] both of the dead and of the living” (Rom. 14:9, Revised Standard Version). That is to say, the object of our Lord’s death and resurrection was not merely to bless, rule over, and restore the living of mankind, but it was to have authority over, or full control of, *the dead as well as the living*, ensuring the benefits of his Ransom as much to the one as to the other. He “gave himself a *ransom* [that is, a *corresponding price*] *for all*” in order to bless all — *to give to every man an individual trial for life*.

To claim that Jesus gave himself “a ransom *for all*” but that only a mere handful of the ransomed ones will ever receive any benefit is absurd, for the implication would be either that God accepted the Ransom price and then unjustly refused to grant the release of the redeemed or that after Jesus redeemed all, God was either unable or unwilling to carry out His original benevolent design. The unchangeableness of the divine plan, no less than the

perfection of divine Justice and Love, repels and contradicts such a thought, and assures us that the original benevolent plan, of which the “ransom for all” was the basis, will be fully carried out in God’s due time and will bring to faithful believers the blessing of release from Adamic condemnation and an opportunity to return to the rights and liberties of sons of God, as enjoyed before sin and the curse.

Once the actual benefits and the results of the Ransom are clearly seen, all objections to its being of universal application must vanish. The “ransom for all,” given by “the man Christ Jesus,” does not guarantee everlasting life or blessings to any man, but it does guarantee to everyone *another opportunity or trial for life everlasting*. The first trial of man in Adam, which resulted in the loss of many blessings conferred in the Garden of Eden, has actually turned into a blessing of experience to the loyal-hearted by reason of the Ransom that God has provided through His Son.

However, the fact that the human race has been ransomed from the first penalty does not guarantee they will all, when individually tried for everlasting life, render the obedience necessary in order to live everlastingly. Man, by reason of his

present experience with sin and its bitter penalty, death, will be fully forewarned. And when, as a result of the Ransom, he is granted another trial, an *individual* trial, under the eye and control of Jesus—who so loved the world as to give his life for the human race, and who would not that any should perish but that all should turn to God and live—we may be sure that only the willfully disobedient will receive the penalty of the second trial (John 3:16). That penalty is the “*second* death,” from which there will be no ransom, no release, because there would be no object for another ransom or a further trial (Rev. 21:8).

By the end of the next or Kingdom Age, *all* will have fully seen and tasted both good and evil (Matt. 6:10). *All* will have witnessed and experienced the goodness and the love of God. *All* will have had a full, fair individual trial for life under the most favorable conditions. More could not be asked, and more will not be given. That trial will decide forever who would be righteous and holy under a thousand trials, and it will also determine who would still be unjust, unholy, and filthy under a thousand trials.

Although the circumstances of the tried ones in the next age will be different, *more favorable* than in the present age, the terms

or conditions of their individual trial for life will be the same as in the Adamic trial. The law of God remains the same; it changes not. It will still say, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4,20). And the conditions of man will be no more favorable, so far as surroundings are concerned, than the conditions and surroundings in Eden, but the great difference will be *increased knowledge*. The experience with evil contrasted with the experience with good, which will accrue to each individual during the trial of the coming age, will constitute the advantage by reason of which the results of the second trial will differ so widely from the results of the first trial. In fact, it was because of the results of the first trial that divine Wisdom and Love provided the "ransom for all," and thus guaranteed to all the blessing of a new trial. No more favorable trial, no more favorable law, and no more favorable conditions or circumstances could in any way be conceived of as reasons for another ransom or a further trial for any beyond the Millennial Age.

Let there be no misunderstanding. *The Ransom does not excuse sin in any*. It does not propose to count sinners as saints and usher them thus into everlasting bliss. The Ransom merely releases accepting sinners from the first condemnation and its results—

both direct and indirect—and places them again on trial for life, wherein their own willful obedience or disobedience will decide whether they may or may not have everlasting life.

Nor should it be assumed, as so many seem disposed to do, that all of those who live in a state of civilization and see or possess a Bible in the present age have thus a full opportunity or trial for life, for the fall has not injured every one of Adam's children alike. Some have come into the world so weak and depraved that they are easily blinded by the god of this world, Satan, and led captive by besetting and surrounding sin (2 Cor. 4:4). To a greater or lesser degree, *all* are under this influence, so that even when they intend to do what is right, evil is present and more powerful. The good they would do is almost impossible, while the evil they would not do is almost unavoidable (Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:15,19).

Adam's death was sure, even though it was reached by 930 years of dying (Gen. 5:5). Since Adam himself was dying, all of his children are born in the same dying condition without a right to everlasting life, and like their parents, most die after a more or less lingering process. It should be remembered, however, that

the penalty for sin is not the pain and suffering in dying but *death itself*, the extinction of life, in which the dying process culminates. The suffering is only incidental to the dying, and the penalty falls on many with little or no suffering.

It should also be remembered that when Adam forfeited life, he forfeited it *forever*. Not one of his posterity has ever been able to expiate his guilt or to regain the lost inheritance. All of the human race are either dead or dying, and if they cannot expiate their guilt before death, they certainly cannot do it when dead, when not in existence. The penalty for sin was not simply to die with the privilege and right thereafter of returning to life. In the penalty pronounced, there was no intimation of release (Gen. 2:17). Restitution, therefore, is an act of *free grace* (favor) on God's part, and as soon as the death penalty was incurred—even while it was being pronounced—there was a hint of God's grace to come. The realization, in due time, of God's free grace to all will fully declare His love. Had it not been for the gleam of hope afforded by the statement in Genesis 3:15 that the seed of woman would bruise the serpent's head, the human race would have been in utter despair, but this promise indicated God had some plan for their benefit.

When God swore to Abraham that in the patriarch's seed, all the families of the earth would be blessed, He implied a resurrection of all, a restitution, for many had already died and others have since died unblessed (Gen. 22:18). That promise is still sure. All will be blessed when the times of restitution or refreshing shall come (Acts 3:19). Moreover, since blessing indicates favor, and since God's favor was withdrawn and His curse came instead because of sin, the promise of a future blessing implies the removal of that curse and, consequently, a return of His favor. The promise to Abraham also implied either that God would relent, change His decree, and clear the guilty human race or that He had some plan by which all could be redeemed with man's penalty being paid by another. It is the latter.

As the entire human race was condemned and lost life through Adam, so when Jesus gave himself "a ransom for all," his death involved the possibility of an unborn race in his loins. When in due time, a full satisfaction, or corresponding price, for all men is put into the hands of divine Justice, then he who thus bought all will have full authority to restore everyone who comes unto God by him. "Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon *all* men to condemnation; even so by the

righteousness of one [Jesus] the free gift came upon *all* men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:18,19). The proposition is plain: As many as have shared death on account of Adam's sin will have life privileges offered to them by the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for them, becoming sacrificially *Adam's substitute* before the broken law and thus giving himself "a ransom for all." Christ died "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18).

It should never be overlooked, however, that all of God's provisions for mankind recognize the human will as a factor in securing the divine favor so abundantly supplied. Some have missed this point in examining the text just quoted from the fifth chapter of Romans. As the sentence of condemnation extended to all of Adam's seed, even so, through the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Father's plan by the sacrifice of himself on man's behalf, a free gift was extended to all, a gift of forgiveness, which, if accepted, will constitute a justification or basis for life everlasting. As by Adam's disobedience, all were made sinners, so by the obedience of Jesus, many *shall be* (not were) made righteous. If the Ransom alone, without one's acceptance of it,

makes a person righteous, then Romans 5:19 would have read, "By the obedience of one, many *were made* righteous." Although the Ransom price has been given by the Redeemer, only a few during the present Christian or Gospel Age, relatively speaking, have been made righteous, being justified through faith in his blood, but since Christ is the satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, all men may on this account be absolved and released from the penalty of Adam's sin under the New Covenant soon to be established (Jer. 31:31-33; Rom. 3:23-25).

There is no unrighteousness with God. Hence "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). As God would have been unjust to allow men to escape the pronounced penalty before satisfaction was rendered, so also He would be unjust if He were to forbid man's restitution, since by His own arrangement, the penalty was paid. The *same unswerving justice* that once condemned man to death now stands pledged for the release of all who, confessing their sins, apply for life through Christ. "It is God that justifieth. [Therefore] Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:33,34).

The completeness of the Ransom is the strongest possible argument for the restitution of all mankind who will accept it on the proffered terms. The very character of God for justice and honor stands pledged to the Ransom. Every promise He has made implies the Ransom. Every typical sacrifice under the Law pointed to the great and sufficient sacrifice: “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Jesus is “the propitiation [the satisfaction] for our sins [the Church’s]: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Since death is the penalty or wages for sin, then logically, when sin is canceled, the wages must in due time cease (Rom. 6:23). Any other view would be unreasonable and unjust. The fact that no recovery from Adamic loss is yet accomplished, even though nearly two thousand years have elapsed since our Lord died, is not an argument against restitution. And the fact that four thousand years elapsed before his death is not a proof that God did not plan the redemption of the human race before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Both the two thousand years since and the four thousand years before the death of Christ were appointed times for other parts of the work preparatory to “the times of restitution of all things.”

Let no one hastily suppose that there is in this view anything in conflict with the teaching of Scripture that faith toward God, repentance for sin, and reformation of character are indispensable for salvation. This feature of God's plan can be treated in depth, but for now, we suggest that up to the present time, only a relative few have ever had a sufficiency of light to produce full faith, repentance, and reformation. Some have been blinded in part by Satan, and some have been blinded completely. In due time, all must be recovered from blindness, as well as from death, so that each will have for himself a full chance to prove by obedience or disobedience his worthiness or unworthiness of life everlasting (1 Tim. 2:3,4). Those who prove themselves unworthy of life will die again, the Second Death, from which there will be no redemption and, consequently, no resurrection. The death that comes on account of Adam's sin and all the imperfections that have followed in its wake will be removed because of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, but the death that comes as the result of an individual's *willful* apostasy is final. This latter sin hath never forgiveness, and its penalty, Second Death, will be everlasting—not everlasting dying but everlasting death, that is, a death unbroken by a resurrection.

And there is another point: Restitution refers not to a resurrection to spiritual life but to a restoration to *human* life. Adam was promised *eternal earthly life* based upon obedience, but he forfeited his right to earthly life because of disobedience. Jesus' sacrifice procured for every man an opportunity to obtain that which had previously been placed before Father Adam: everlasting earthly life.

The question could be asked, Is restitution practical? Some have supposed that if the billions of the dead were resurrected, there would be no room for them on the earth. And even if there should be room for them, some maintain that the earth could not sustain so large a population. It is even claimed by some that the earth is like one vast graveyard and that if all the dead were awakened, they would trample on one another for want of room. Now this is an important point. How strange it would be to find that while the Bible declares a resurrection for all, yet by actual measurements, they would not have a footing on the earth! If we do some simple calculations, we will find this fear is unfounded and that there is an abundance of room for the restitution of all, as God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets.

Let us assume that it is six thousand years since the creation of man, which is approximately the length of time according to Bible chronology, and that 1.4 billion people currently inhabit the earth, although of course the actual population is higher. The human race began with just one pair, Adam and Eve, but we will make a *very liberal* estimate. Suppose that there were as many at the beginning as 1.4 billion people, even though there were only two, and further, that there were never any fewer than that number at any time, even though the Flood reduced the population to eight people. Again let us be liberal and estimate three generations to a century or thirty-three years to a generation, though according to the fifth chapter of Genesis, only eleven generations spanned the time from Adam to the Flood—a period of 1,656 years or about 150 years to each generation.

Now let us see. Six thousand years are sixty centuries. With three generations to each century, there would be 180 generations since Adam ($60 \times 3 = 180$), and with 1.4 billion people to a generation, the total number of our race from creation to the present time would be 252 billion ($180 \times 1.4 = 252$). According to this liberal estimate, which is probably twice the actual number, where shall we find room enough for such a great multitude? The

state of Texas in the United States contains 237,000 square miles. There are 27,878,400 square feet in a square mile and, therefore, 6,607,180,800,000 square feet in Texas. Allowing 10 square feet as the surface covered by each dead body, we find that Texas, as a cemetery, would hold 660,718,080,000 bodies—or over two and one-half times our exaggerated estimate of the number of our race who have ever lived on this earth. To state the matter another way, our grossly exaggerated estimate of 252 billion individuals would allow standing room of more than 26 square feet per person in the state of Texas—a *very small fraction* of the future habitable portion of planet Earth.

There is not much difficulty, then, in settling the objection to restitution based on not having sufficient room for all of the people. Moreover, in calling to mind certain prophecies of the Old Testament such as “the earth shall yield her increase,” “the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose,” and “in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert,” we see that God has foreseen all the necessities of His plan and will make ample provision for the needs of His creatures in what will seem to be a very natural way (Psa. 67:6; Ezek. 34:27; Isa. 35:1,6). How great is our God!