

Ransom Sacrifice

The word “ransom,” refers to the price or payment made to set free a prisoner or slave. The price is considered the equivalent of the person who is thereby freed from liabilities and charges.

“Ransom Sacrifice”, is one of the ten fundamental doctrines of the Holy Bible. The sermon denotes the immeasurable love which God has for man by which He sent His only begotten Son to die in place of sinful mankind. Apostle John states in 1 John 4:9,10 thus: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins”. And in John 3:16, Jesus Christ himself states: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”.

Life Lost

The question of ransom arose because of the life man lost in the Garden of Eden. After creating Adam and putting him in the beautiful Garden, God Almighty gave him a law to the effect that he could eat of every fruit in the garden except the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:16, 17) But the devil came in the form of a serpent and lured Eve into eating the fruit after which she “gave also unto her husband...and he did eat”. (Genesis 3:1-6) The consequence of that disobedience was

The sentence of death God passed on Adam, which among other things, reads thus: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return”. – Genesis 3:16-19

As a result of the fall of Adam, the entire human race came short of the glory of God, having been born in sin. (Romans 3:9,19,23) David the prophet declared: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”. (Psalm 51:5) Because man has been in the bondage of death due to sin, Apostle Paul stated: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”.

Romans 5:12

For man to be free from the bondage of inherited sin, there must be a remedy for the life lost in the Garden of Eden. This remedy must be equivalent to the value of the perfect life which Adam had in consonance with the divine rule that a (perfect) life must go for a (perfect) life.

(Deuteronomy 19:21) It was not possible for any one among the sons of men to pay back the life lost by Adam, since they were all born in sin. Who then will pay the price for man's transgression? Who will ransom man from the bondage of sin and death? Jesus Christ was willing to carry out that duty and to him the task was assigned. – John 10:15, 17, 18; Romans 7:24, 25.

Shadows

It is worthy of note that even in passing the sentence on the serpent, God Almighty had in verse 15 of Genesis chapter 3 stated that, though the serpent (satan the devil) will initially bruise the heel of the seed, the seed of the woman (Jesus Christ, Galatians 3:16) will eventually bruise the head of the serpent (Romans 16:20).

In several other places in the Old Testament, God Almighty, by express declarations and by picture language, gave the promise that He will redeem man from the burden of sin and death. The blood sprinkled on the door posts of the Jews on the night of Passover, so that the

destroying angel will pass over their houses, (Exodus 12:1-30) foreshadowed the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Apostle Paul states: "...For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us". – 1 Corinthians 5:7.

Another pointer to the need for man's redemption was the law God Almighty gave His servant Moses while the Jews were in the wilderness, on the payment to the Lord of half a shekel, by every male in Israel from 20 years old and above "as a ransom for his soul". The law further states that: "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less" – the benefit of redemption is offered equally to all; it is not a function of money. It should also be noted that the atonement money was for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, now represented by Jesus Christ, "A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man". – Exodus 30:15; [compare Numbers 3:40-51]; Hebrews 8:2.

Also, in time of old, the Jews had a Day of Atonement, which marked the end of ten days of penitence, to cleanse the individual from defilement on that day, the priest, clad in holy linen garments, made an atonement for him-self, his family and for all the assembly of Israel, killing the bullock of the sin offering, sprinkling the blood on the mercy seat, killing the goat of the sin-offering and selecting the scapegoat on whose head was confessed the transgression of Israel for the year just passed. Thereafter, the sin-laden goat was led to wander away into the wilderness. This provision was done as "an everlasting statute ... to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year". – Leviticus 16:1-34.

It is vital to note, that the point was consistently being made that all the people were doomed and were therefore in need of atonement to stay alive.

Christ The Ransomer

St. Paul in a detailed treatise on the ransom sacrifice of Christ explained that sacrifices in time of old were only temporary palliatives pointing to and awaiting the coming of Jesus Christ. He wrote: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect...But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins". Hebrews 10:1-4.

Thus, Jesus Christ had to be translated from the heavenly realm into the womb of Mary so as to be born on earth as a perfect man to pay back the life lost at the Garden of Eden. – Hebrews 2:7, 14.

John the Baptist identified Jesus Christ as the lamb of God that "taketh away the sin of the world". (John 1:29; see also Revelation 13:8) Moreover the Bible says: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him". (2 Corinthians 5:21) That was why Jesus Christ while on earth stated that he came to give his life as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28) At the Memorial Supper, he also stated clearly that the bread he gave the apostles meant or represented his body, while the wine stood for his blood "which is shed for many for the remission of sins". – Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:24.

The ransom work covers the entire scope of the sufferings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and therefore lies at the very heart of the gospel message. It is true that during his mission on earth, Jesus Christ, by his preaching and by example, taught man how to serve God. But even if they did all he commanded them to do, the faithful cannot have the liberty and salvation God promised them without the ransom paid by Jesus Christ by the forfeiting of his life.

During his first advent on earth, some of the wicked Jews reported Jesus Christ to the Chief Priests and Pharisees who were apprehensive of losing their influence and privileges due to the mass-following Jesus Christ was getting. At a meeting of the Pharisees Caiaphas, the High Priest declared: "Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not". Apostle John then explained: "This spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should

die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad". (John 11:49-52) Truly did St. Paul state: "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; see also Galatians 3:13; Hebrew 9:11-28; 1 John 3:4

By the death of Jesus Christ, the debt of sin against man was fully paid, not merely cancelled. His blood or life, which he surrendered as the "ransom", effectively secured the deliverance of the children of God from the bondage of sin. Having died as a perfect man so as to "taste death for every man" Jesus Christ was then in a position to redeem man from death. In one of his most lucid expositions on the subject, St. Paul said: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage". -Hebrews 2:9, 14,15.

As opposed to the sacrifices made under the Mosaic law, the expiatory blood shed by Jesus Christ, which was made once, was perfect and effective for ever – it needed not to be renewed every year. St. Paul declared: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God..." – Hebrews 10:10-12. By his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ led captivity captive (Ephesians 4:8) and thus paved the way for the fulfillment of the promise God Almighty made through Hosea the prophet to wit: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes". (Hosea 13:14) In God's Kingdom fully established, death, which is man's greatest enemy will be no more. – 1 Corinthians 15: 26.

Living Unto Christ

Having paid the supreme price to give the world liberty, the least that is expected of us all is to show appreciation for the great sacrifice Jesus Christ made in dying that we may live. In John 15:13, 14 Christ Jesus declared: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you". Those being ransomed must therefore be humble enough to obey the voice of Jesus Christ by living "soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world". (Titus 2:11-14; See also John 10: 14-18) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him", Jesus Christ stated. (John 3:36) And Apostle John added: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin". – 1 John 1:7.

In his letter to the Christians at Corinth Apostle Paul stated: "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new". (2 Corinthians 5:15, 17) In his epistle, St. Peter made it clear that the proofs of true discipleship are belief of the truth and love for one another, when he stated:.. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot...Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently". – 1 Peter 1:18-22. See also John 13:34, 35

It must be pointed out that those who have come to the knowledge of the truth but do not keep the commandments of God through Jesus Christ, will not get the benefit of the ransom sacrifice. Such ones as it were "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame"-. Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-29.

It is by appreciating the goodness of God in sending Jesus Christ into the world and by showing such appreciation through faithful service that those who have come to God will be in close communion with Him.