

## A RANSOM FOR ALL: BALANCING THE SCALES OF JUSTICE

*“Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.” — Psalm 89:14*

Christians throughout the world of all denominations are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and rejoicing in the hope it provides for those who trust in his blood. But at the same time, many Christians ask us: Why did Jesus have to suffer on the cross? Why did our heavenly Father set up conditions in such a way as to leave no other hope for fallen man than through the *blood* of His only begotten Son?

### A KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

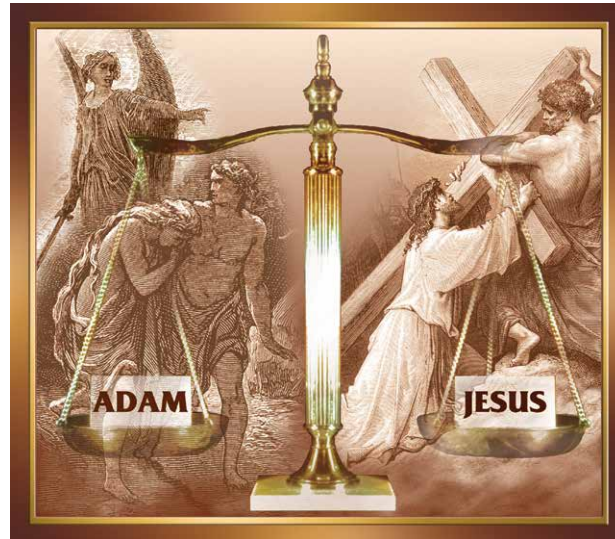
Ultimately, God’s desire has been to create a family in heaven and a family upon the earth who love Him and reflect His loving and righteous character. But to retain the gift of life, God’s children must be proven worthy of such a favor. And so, in His wisdom, God presented a simple test of obedience to our first parents: *“Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* (Genesis 2:17) This test *seems* simple enough, but it was too much for Adam and Eve, for they had a certain amount of *knowledge*, but they did not have *experience* and could not understand the far reaching consequences of disobedience.

Thus, God permitted Adam and Eve to choose their own course, even at the expense of losing life. *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”* (Ezekiel 18:4) True, God could have prevented sin from entering the world by making his creation blindly obedient, but man would be no better than a robot, without true happiness and incapable of sincere love. To be a child of God — in His moral likeness — man must be created with the ability and liberty to love and obey by choice. Therefore, God permitted humanity to not only receive the *knowledge* of good and evil, but to *experience* the consequence of sin in the exercise of *free-will*.

In God’s foreknowledge, He anticipated Adam’s fall into sin. God also knew that, without the experience of truly knowing good and evil, many of Adam’s children would eventually *choose* to disobey — just as did their father Adam. Thus, evil would always be a constant threat to the peace and harmony of mankind. God’s strict *justice* could not allow Adam and his children to escape the pronounced penalty of death. However, in His *mercy*, God designed a plan which would utilize man’s fall into sin and bring about a valuable lesson.

This plan would allow the earth to be filled with the children of Adam, each one learning the *exceeding sinfulness of sin* and its consequences, and yet provide for them a way of escape from the penalty of endless death. The lesson would be everlasting, so that, in due time, sin and its penalty will no longer plague humanity. Thus, it has been by God’s mercy that

He has *permitted evil* — not for the purpose of blotting the sinner out of existence forever — but for the purpose of *teaching righteousness* by providing a time when there will be an opportunity for *reform*.



### A LIFE FOR A LIFE

We know that Jehovah could not arbitrarily release Adam and Eve from condemnation. He could *“not clear the guilty,”* even though He loved them as all parents love their children. (Exodus 34:7) The penalty for disobedience had to be *paid* to satisfy God’s justice — the *foundation of His throne*. (Psalm 89:14) How then could God lift the

curse from man without violating His justice? By finding a *substitute* for Adam, God could be both *just* and yet *justify* the sinner. *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood... that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”* Romans 3:23-26

Here we see the wonderful economic feature connected with God’s *divine plan of the ages*. If *all* mankind inherited sin from father Adam — then, if a *substitute* could be found to pay the price of Adam’s penalty, *all* of mankind would be redeemed by that *substitute*. By ONE man the whole trouble came — by ONE man the whole trouble will be rectified. The Apostle Paul points this out again, saying, *“As by a man came death, by a man comes also the resurrection of the dead; for as all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive...”* 1 Corinthians 15:21-23

God’s faithful servant Job said: *“If there be... one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: Then He is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.”* (Job 33:23, 24) To redeem Adam, his *substitute* would need to take his place under the divine

penalty of *death*. He would need to *die* a *ransom* for Adam. The Greek word for *ransom* is *anti-lutron*. It means a *corresponding price*, and it carries the idea of an *exact* exchange. To maintain the *balance of justice*, it required that the *substitute* had to be *like* Adam in all respects. That meant that the *blood* of bulls and goats was not acceptable as a substitute, nor would the death of an angelic being be acceptable. None of the fallen race would qualify either, “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*” (Romans 3:23) We are all born as imperfect beings in a downward course to the grave. Justice required that the *substitute* be a *perfect man* — like Adam before he sinned — with a full right to everlasting life and the promise of an unborn race within him.

The proposition was a plain one: since ALL have shared death on account of Adam’s sin, ALL will have a fresh opportunity to gain life by our Lord Jesus. *The perfect man who died* sacrificially became Adam’s *substitute* — his *ransom* price. By the sacrifice of Jesus on Adam’s behalf, Adam and all his children are redeemed.

This redemption constitutes justification, the basis for life everlasting. “*As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, 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.*” Romans 5:18,19; Ephesians 4:7

#### A WILLING SACRIFICE — Hebrews 10:7

Jesus, the *only begotten Son* of God came to earth from his place in Heaven as his Father’s master workman. (John 1:3) When he learned about his Father’s plan to rescue Adam and his unborn race, he was quick to embrace it. By his own *free-will*, Jesus “*Made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*” (Philippians 2:7, 8) Jesus “*...took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.*” (Hebrews 2:16) The firstborn *spiritual* Son of God divested himself of his *spiritual* glory and *became a man* — and yet, unlike Adam, Jesus retained perfection — *human* perfection. He remained “*undefiled, separate from sinners.*” (Hebrews 7:26) He willingly gave his *perfect* life “*for the life of the world.*” John 6:51

Jesus’ faithfulness *even unto the death of the cross* did not go unrewarded, for in Philippians 2:9, 10 we read: “*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...*” However, for Jesus to be honored by mankind, his role in God’s plan could not end with his death. There was more to do in bringing mankind back into harmony with Jehovah.

#### THE RANSOMING WORK CONTINUES

The man Christ Jesus was successful in his mission to take upon himself the penalty of death in Adam’s stead. Having been redeemed from that death penalty, the sinful race of Adam can justly be raised from their graves. But, mankind has

been exposed to over 6000 years of sin, evil and degradation. It is not enough to merely exchange Jesus for Adam. With the effects of sin still being upon them, the world of mankind remains degraded mentally, morally and physically. Thus, when they are released from their graves, they will have no hope of standing before God’s strict, uncompromising justice. So we see then that two things need to happen in order to *fully* redeem mankind: 1) they will need to be released from the penalty of death placed upon father Adam — the *substitution* of Jesus for Adam, and 2) mankind must be lifted up out of the degradation of sin and depravity in order to stand before God and to be brought into harmony with Him. They need to be returned to a condition of absolute holiness and perfection of being — innocent of all sin and even the desire for sin.

All of Adam’s children have been allowed to experience the full effect of the downward path of sin, disease and death for the very purpose of learning to abhor evil and to desire righteousness.

Having seen the depths of degradation to which sin leads, they will be eager to learn righteousness, but they will need a process of time to grow to perfection of character. “*...for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*” Isaiah 26:9

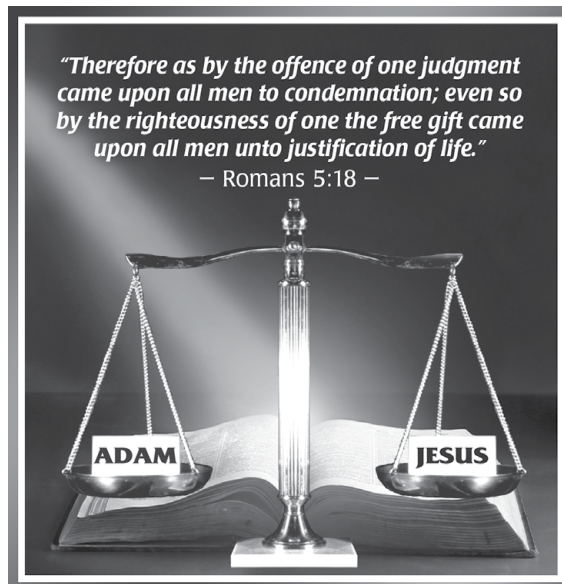
For Jesus’ death to erase every contamination of sin, therefore, God has provided a plan which will undo its awful effects by providing a period of time for mankind’s release from death and a thorough restoration to a state of perfection. With this sufficient length of time, the race of mankind will have the opportunity to fully regain *all* which was lost from the fall into sin. This period of time is called by various names: *the times of restitution; the Mediatorial*

*reign of Christ; the thousand-years; and the judgment day.* Acts 3:19, 20; Hebrews 8:6; Revelation 20:6; 2 Peter 3:7, 8

#### A MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

During this thousand-year period of time, mankind will be under the jurisdiction of Christ — their *Mediator*. The job of that Mediator will be to lift mankind up out of the depths of sin — to educate in the ways of righteousness those who have been raised from their graves. This Mediator will stand between the fallen race of Adam and the full justice of Jehovah until such time as they are fully able to stand before Divine justice by themselves. “*For 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.*” 1 Timothy 2:3-6

We see from this scripture that God desires *all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth*. The Greek reads more accurately a *FULL knowledge of God’s truth*. Christ, the Mediator who stands between God and man, will protect those who come forth from death and the dying condition as they receive this *knowledge*. This truth will develop in mankind





the moral character which will eventually allow them to stand before God without a Mediator. Yes, as a *Mediator*, Christ will bring about full redemption — full *atonement* [at-one-ment] between God and man.

The fact that Jesus suffered for three and a half years and then died upon the cross, proved his loyalty to His Father's will. This test of obedience manifests to both men and angels his worthiness of high exaltation. It was Jesus' death that released mankind from the penalty of sin, but it was the pouring out of his life in sacrifice which has made him a *sympathetic* High Priest. (Hebrews 5:1-10) Having been touched with the sorrows of the world, he will be a wonderful counsellor, teacher and support for mankind as they walk up the *highway of holiness*. (Isaiah 35:8, 10) This *highway* of opportunity will lift mankind up out of sin to a condition of mental, moral, and physical perfection — making them acceptable to God.

#### A NEW CREATION

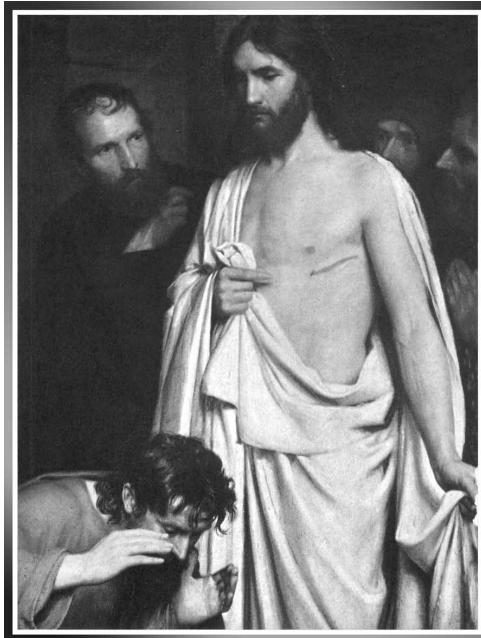
As the world of mankind comes back from the grave, they will need this Mediator to guide them in the ways of righteousness. Therefore, God provided another feature of His plan which has been in progress throughout the Christian era. A group which will serve as spiritual companions to Christ in his work has been invited to a *higher calling* than that of the world of mankind. (Philippians 3:14; Hebrews 3:1) This is a *New Creation* and is spoken of as Christ's *Church* — his *body* — Christ being the *head* of that body. (Colossians 1:18) So close is the relationship between Christ and his Church that it is likened unto a *bridegroom* and a *bride*. (Revelation 21:2) The New Creation will become "*joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*" Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 5:17

Those who accept this invitation to be Christ's spiritual companions have been few compared to that of the vast majority of the world. They are a *little flock* who accept the merit of Christ's sacrifice *now* in order to reign with him during the *future* age for man's recovery from the effects of sin. What better demonstration of God's power could there be than to *call* these *body members* of the *New Creation* from out of Adam's fallen race? These individuals are called from the lowest low and brought to the highest high — individuals who were "*born in sin and shapen in iniquity.*" (Psalm 51:5) And yet, our heavenly Father develops these through their trials of life to the point where they can safely be rewarded with the Divine nature. As Christ's *joint heirs*, these faithful few will be thoroughly sympathetic teachers to the world of mankind, since they have experienced the same pain, hardship and sorrow under the reign of sin and death in this life. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 2 Peter 1:4

All during the Christian age, this little company of believers have poured out their lives as a *living sacrifice* — being made acceptable through faith in the merit of Christ's blood. They have been invited to be *dead with him*, in order that they might also *live and reign with him*. (2 Timothy 2:11, 12;

Romans 6:4, 5; 12:1, 2) Their trial of faith has been during this *present evil world*, when it has been hard to learn righteousness. The world's trial is under the more favorable surroundings of the *next age* when Satan will be bound and sin will not be tolerated. (Revelation 20:2) The Church now suffers persecution for their faith, whereas, righteousness will be the norm in God's Kingdom, and it will be rewarded. The truth is not heeded during this present evil world, but under the reign of Christ and his Church, it will be welcomed! Malachi 3:15; Psalm 107:42

Together, Christ and his spiritual companions constitute the *Mediator* of the *New Covenant* and will be responsible for the restitution of mankind — reigning in love and righteousness. In this time when sin abounds, only a few believers in Christ have yet in any sense been released from the original sentence and its penalty. (2 Corinthians 4:4) Their escape is not yet actual, but it is *reckoned by faith in Jesus' blood*. This special, elect class receives their salvation now, whereas the rest of the world has been blinded by *the god of this world*, and must wait for their appointed time of salvation — the *Messianic Age*.



#### ETERNAL AND UNIVERSAL HARMONY THE FINAL OUTCOME OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE

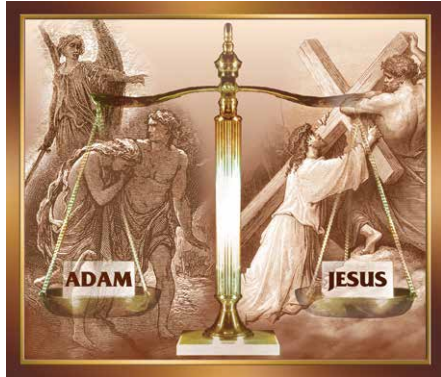
By the end of the Messianic reign of Christ and his Church, all mankind will have fully experienced both *good* and *evil*. All will have witnessed the goodness and love of God. All will have had a full, fair, individual trial for life, under most favorable conditions. (Jeremiah 31:29-31) That trial will decide forever who will be righteous and holy; and it will also determine who will be unjust, and unholy still.

The death sentence which came upon all on account of Adam's sin, and the imperfections which have followed in its wake, will gradually be removed because of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

But, after this period of education in righteousness, if any fail to learn the difference between *good* and *evil*, they are left with no protection from Divine justice. "*For the death that he died, he died to sin once for all.*" (Hebrews 10:10; 1 Peter 3:18) By the end of Christ's reign, those who sin willfully — having once been cleansed from sin and thoroughly enlightened — go into everlasting death — the *second death*. (Revelation 20:6, 14; Jeremiah 31:29) That life will not be allowed to become a detriment to itself and all others. It will always be that "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*"

When the divine plan of the ages is complete and the reign of sin and death is past — each and every sentient being in all of God's creation will understand thoroughly that life everlasting depends on continued harmony with *love* and *justice*. God's purpose in creating human-kind, permitting their relatively short experience with evil and then rescuing them from the grips of pain and sorrow, extends farther than to simply rescue a few believers now. It is even larger than to rescue all of the fallen race of Adam. The rescue of the world of mankind will teach the lesson throughout eternity to *all* of God's creation — both human and angelic — that He is all *wise* and *loving*, all *powerful* and *just*.

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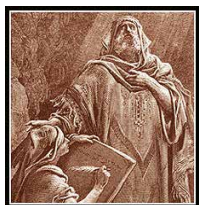
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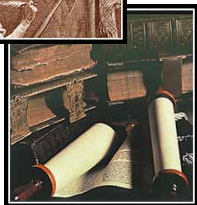
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