

HOW READEST THOU?

The doctrine of atonement and reconciliation to God by the death of Christ implies that it was his death which constituted the reconciling act. It must be conceded that if the natural death of Jesus on the cross paid the penalty, then it was natural life only that man forfeited by disobedience. If both of these claims be true, then all men, according to Scripture, were, on the death of Christ, at some time entitled to a resurrection. Now, in the light of these facts, we should desire an explanation by substitutionists of 1 Cor. 15:17-18. There the Apostle is credited with saying: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." If the doctrine of substitution be true, these two verses cannot be. If, as is claimed, the death of Christ paid man's penalty, then, whether Christ be raised or not, man could not justly be in his sins. Moreover, if Christ's death entitled man to a resurrection, and this, substitutionists claim, then neither those in Christ nor out of him could have perished because of having previously fallen asleep.

– Day Star.

OUR REPLY.

The force of this expression, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins: then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished," lies in the fact that if Christ was not raised, he was dead, and could have no power to bless the families of earth, as he had purposed. The death of Christ as purchasing mankind, would still be a grand expression of his love, even though he had never arisen from the dead to dispense the blessings which his ransom-sacrifice gave the right to bestow;

for "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But it would have been waste and loss to purchase us had he not had in view a resurrection, which would enable him to bless those bought.

But again, according to the types of the sin-offering, If the High Priest performed his sacrifice in a manner acceptable, so that its sweet perfume filled the Most Holy, then he should LIVE beyond the vail and could come forth to bless those for whose sin he had made sacrifice; and if he lived not, it was an evidence that his sacrifice for sins had not been properly done, and was not acceptable to Jehovah, and no blessing nor remission of sins could come from such a sacrifice.

Thus seen, Paul's argument is this: Christian friends, you occupy an unreasonable, a ridiculous position when you say (verse 12) that a resurrection of the dead is an impossibility. If it is an impossibility, then is Christ not risen: and if so, why do you talk about being forgiven your sins and having hopes through him for the future? A dead Christ – one not raised from death – can never bless you; wherefore, if you accept the good news of redemption and blessing through Christ, be consistent and admit also a resurrection of Christ and the resurrection for all through him.

Jesus' work for mankind is greater and grander than some seem able to grasp. He bought us with his own precious blood – substituting himself as a man for the race of men, tasting death for every man. But this purchase of mankind was only a means to an end – he bought the race that (in due time) he might have the legal right to RESTORE it to perfection. Hence, both the death of Christ was necessary for our purchase, and his resurrection was essential to the carrying out of the blessed plan for our restoration to harmony with Jehovah.

Other statements of the same Apostle prove that he recognized fully the necessity both of the death to purchase and of the resurrection to confer the blessing upon those purchased. He says of Jesus, "Who was delivered [into death] for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" – i.e., in order that he might justify us. (Rom. 4:25.) And again, "If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the DEATH of his Son, much more [easily believed, is the promise that] being reconciled we shall be saved [recovered fully, from the imperfections and penalties of sin] by his life." (Rom. 5:10.)

It was impossible for the Apostle, as well as for us, to state every feature of the plan at once; hence, in treating of the resurrection in the passage above cited by our contemporary, he does not allude to the value of the death of Christ. But blind indeed must be the reader, if he has not seen that Paul and every other Apostle and prophet laid great stress upon the death of Christ as a ransom for all, the only BASIS of hope for blessings through him.

Here let us remind our readers that those who deny that Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all" should give some reason for his death – an adequate reason for so great an event. To say that he died as we die, because of sin and imperfection, is to deny the testimony of Scripture, that he was holy, harmless and separate from sinners, and had no cause of death in him. To claim that he died merely as our example (to show us how to die?) is to furnish an inadequate reason, for there are many noble examples furnished in Scripture of those who laid down their lives for the truth. (Heb. 11:37,38).

The only adequate reason for Jesus' death is repeated over and over again in Scripture, viz.: that we being condemned to death, he took our nature that he might "taste death for every

man." "He died for our sins," "redeemed" us, "purchased" us,
"bought us," giving himself "a ransom [equivalent price] for all."
