

EXCEPT A CORN OF WHEAT DIE

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a kernel of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." – John 12:24.

It has been urged by some that this statement proves that the Lord's work for mankind was not that of a substitute. We hold the very contrary to be the fact: that it does teach substitution exactly.

The words were used a few days before our Lord's crucifixion, about the time that he began to show the disciples (Matt. 16:21-23) how he must suffer many things and be killed and be raised again the third day, when Peter rebuked him and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord," this shall not be unto thee, and was in turn rebuked. The Lord, in furnishing a reason for his death, drew an illustration from nature, likening himself to the seed grain whose death becomes a source of life to many grains of like kind.

It was the *man* Christ Jesus who gave himself into death, as the necessary means under God's plan of bringing other *men* into being. It is too well known to be disputed, that if a grain of wheat is planted and dies, it brings forth other grains like itself, and never produces grains of another kind or sort. Then so surely as it was the *man* Jesus who died, it will be a race of *men* like he was when he died that in due time will be developed as the result of his death.

The grain of wheat which *dies* never revives, never rises; it is gone forever, it has ceased to be; its life is given as a *substitute* for the lives of the grains which receive its life and nature *instead* of it. The seed grain gives up its existence as a grain that the others may become living grains. It goes into nonentity as the others were, that they may exist. The Lord's illustration is a perfect one, and in full harmony with his repeated statement that he would lay down

his life for the life of the world – that he would give his life a ransom (a *corresponding price*) for all.

Our Lord teaches that having left the higher nature and become a man, a "kernel of wheat," it was not his purpose to abide or continue to live as a man. Had he chosen to do so he might indeed have preserved his life; he needed not to die. But then the very object of his taking the human nature (that he might become the life-giver to all of Adam's death-sentenced race who would desire it upon God's conditions) would fail of accomplishment. He as the "kernel of wheat" might indeed preserve himself, as his life was not forfeited, and no cause of death was found in him, but thus he alone would have life and the race of Adam would continue dead or dying, under sentence of death without one hope of life. Only in one way could the many be brought to life – by the death of the *one* in whom was the germ of life. And our Lord Jesus himself was that one, the only kernel which had a germ of life, the only man who had a right to life since Adam lost his right by disobedience.

We have already shown at length that to secure for mankind forever the rights and privileges of restitution to perfect manhood, our Lord's laying down of manhood and its rights and privileges was forever; that he did not take them back in his resurrection; that on the contrary he was "put to death in flesh, but made alive in spirit," a new creature, of the divine nature, spirit and not flesh, heavenly and not earthly. (See MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. I., page 175, and Vol. II., page 107.) This illustration of the kernel of wheat shows only the death of the *man* Christ Jesus as our ransom price; it does not show his previous condition as a spirit being, before he became a man; nor does it show his subsequent exaltation far above manhood and far above angels and principalities and powers, to be a sharer of the highest of all natures – the divine nature. But it shows well what the Master used it to illustrate, viz.: his death as a *man* to give life to many *men*.

As the grains which spring up as a result of his death receive from him *only* that which he surrenders for them, so all the blessings which result directly from our Lord's death are human and earthly rights, privileges and blessings – those lost in Adam are the ones redeemed for all by Christ. And it is those very blessings that he will restore to all the worthy in the "times of restitution of all things."

How, then, is it that the Church, called and drawn during the Gospel age by the Father, is offered and is to receive spiritual and heavenly blessings *through* Christ, and not a restitution of the earthly favors lost in Adam?

We answer, that is an *additional* favor granted now, or as the Apostle puts it, "favor *upon* favor;" a special call which ends with the close of the present age. But all thus called to the additional favor must first share in the favor of restitution, which Christ purchased for all. *Justification* in the present age is the equivalent of restitution in the next age, only that it is a restitution received by *faith* instead of an *actual* restitution. Restitution will be the making of men actually right or perfect as men, the actual restoring to them of all that was lost in and by reason of sin. Justification is the *reckoning* of men as right or as though perfectly restored to all the grand qualities and privileges lost by reason of sin.

As the restored race, in the end of the Millennium, will be fully back to harmony with God, as though there never had been any fall or condemnation, so those now *justified* (or *reckoned* restored, right and perfect) are treated as though there had never been a fall or condemnation. They are justified freely from all things – justified by his blood who redeemed them. They are thus *restored* to the human rights in advance of the world in general, though only by faith.

God's object in justifying us, through faith in the ransom, is to make us ready or fit to have offered to us the additional favor

referred to above. That additional favor is the offer that the justified may, during the Gospel age, follow the example of their Lord Jesus and offer up (sacrifice) their justified selves – their justified manhood, after the example of the *man* Christ Jesus, with the promise to such as do so that they shall be counted in with their Master in the sacrifice (though his sacrifice, not ours, possesses the merit or value which pays for the sins of the whole world), and that as he was raised up from death, no more a man, but highly exalted to the divine nature, so they shall also be made sharers of the same high honor and glory with him, and under him as their Lord.

Now (says the Apostle, referring to the Gospel age) is the day of this great offer of this great salvation: "Now is the *acceptable* time" – the time when God agreed to accept such sacrifices – justified through faith in Jesus' blood and presented in his name and merit.

Brethren, I beseech all who have presented themselves thus and who have been received as holy and acceptable in Christ, that ye make good your covenant of sacrifice – even unto death, and that you let no man beguile you of this reward which God hath promised, by turning aside your pure minds from the simplicity of these good tidings, to human philosophizing and theorizing. For other hopes are merely the earthly, the human, though the promises made to the heavenly class be misapplied to them.
