

WHAT THE CHURCH SHARES WITH CHRIST

BRIEFLY summed up, the Church is called, by special invitation, to a "high calling"; a high station – now to suffer with Christ, that she may in due time reign with him. This suffering with Christ is not suffering for sin we may commit, for he never suffered in any such sense. If we suffer with him, our suffering must be along the line of experiencing injustice and in laying down our lives in the service of righteousness. His sufferings were sacrificial sufferings, hence if we share in his sufferings, our sufferings must be sacrificial.

We share with him in the begetting of the holy Spirit and we share with him in his resurrection, if, as the Apostle says, we are faithful in suffering with him, faithful in the matter of participating in his death; for, "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him."

Looking at the matter from the standpoint of the Scriptures we shall see that they sometimes speak of Christ and the Church under the figure of one great Priest, Jesus the Head and the Church his Body, his consecrated self-sacrificing members, and the "Great Company," the antitypical house of Levi, the servants of the Priest. Sometimes the Scriptures speak of us as the under-priesthood, and Christ Jesus as representing the Head of this priesthood. In all these figures the thought is that in some sense we share with our Lord in his work. As the Apostle expresses it, "we are one loaf," all members or participants in that one loaf. The breaking of that one loaf, which was accomplished in our Lord Jesus primarily, is continuing in those who are accepted as members of him, continuing in those who keep their hearts with all diligence.

In the matter of sin atonement, "we were children of wrath even as others," and therefore we had nothing wherewith we could procure the redemption either of ourselves [R4617 : page 168] or of anybody else. Hence we were wholly dependent upon God's provision in Christ Jesus our Lord, "who gave himself a ransom for all" – a ransom-price. We, therefore, have none of this ransom merit in us; but when he gives us a share of this, or imputes it to us, and then, by virtue of our consecration and his becoming our Advocate, the Father receives us as members of his Body, we thus become members of the Ransomer, because his work of ransoming is not completed. He has indeed given the ransom-price, but he has not yet applied this price for all. We had nothing whatever to do with the matter at the time the price was laid down, but we become identified with him before that price is applied to the world. We have, therefore, that much share in the ransoming-work, because the word "ransom" takes the thought not only of the work that Jesus did in the past, but also of the whole procedure down to the very end of the Millennial Age. To ransom means, not only to purchase, but to receive or to recover the thing that is purchased. We have nothing to do with the payment of the price that secures the ransom, but we have something to do – and are counted in with him – in the work of recovering that which was bought with his merit.

It will take all of the Millennial Age to recover mankind in the full sense of the word, to ransom them or to bring them back; as we read, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave." The ransom-price for that purpose was paid nearly 1,900 years ago, but they are not yet ransomed from the grave and will not be until the awakening time in the Millennium. Then, as they gradually come out of sin and death conditions, the full intent and purpose of that ransoming will be in process of accomplishment, and since the Church is to be associated with Christ in all the work of the Millennial Kingdom, therefore the Church, in that sense of the

word, will be identified with the ransoming work, or the work of deliverance.

As represented in the "sin-offering," the merit originally proceeded from the great High Priest, who is Jesus, and that merit is conferred upon the Church, his Body, not apart from himself, but as members of himself. He does not treat us as separate from himself. He is simply adding to himself these members, and as soon as we become justified through his merit and accepted of the Father as members of his Body, we are members of the great High Priest who has a great work to do; and when the merit that has been imputed to us, and to every spirit-begotten member of the household of faith, shall be available for disposal the second time, all the members of his Body will have participation in the application of his sacrifice, in the sprinkling of the New Covenant.

Our Lord's present invitation is to drink with him his "cup," to partake of it. This is the blood of the New Covenant, his blood, "shed for many for the remission of sins," of which we are all to drink, and it takes the entire Gospel Age to find the proper number of those who are thus invited in harmony with the Father's plan, and who are willing to drink of this cup, to be baptized into his death.

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