

QUESTIONS RE ATONEMENT

ADEAR BROTHER asks some questions, the answers to which, we believe, will be helpful, both to himself and to others – either by confirming their understanding of the Truth or by correcting misunderstanding. We trust that the answers will be helpful to many of our readers: –

Question. – Would it be right to say that all the merit of our Lord's sacrifice is imputed to each and every individual when Scripturally he becomes a believer?

Answer. – No; the entire merit of our Lord's death was already in the hands of Justice when Jesus ascended up on high, but it was not applied in any degree nor to any person. According to the Divine intention that merit is to be applied for Adam's original sin and for all the sins of his children, which are the result directly or indirectly of original sin. Thus we might say that every member of Adam's race has a personal, individual interest or share in that redemptive merit, coming to him by Divine arrangement.

Our Lord left the early Church with the instruction that they should tarry at Jerusalem for the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the evidence of their forgiveness of sins and of their adoption as children of God. He ascended on high and appeared in the presence of the Father – for the entire Church of the First-borns. The imputation of His merit was for them all, as well as for the representative few of the Lord's followers who waited for the blessing in the "upper room." [R4997 : page 103]

Question. – You have pointed out that no less than the full merit of Christ would be sufficient for the sins of any individual of the human family. How, then, shall we think of sub-dividing this merit amongst these various individuals composing the Church of the First-borns and

amongst the individuals who will compose the restitution class of the future?

Answer. – The placing of the entire merit of Christ in the hands of Justice guarantees to Justice a full satisfaction for all the Adamic weaknesses of all mankind – even before that merit is specifically appropriated. And since the Church was a part of the world, for whom the sacrificial merit is a sufficient price, God could be just in imputing to each one coming in the name and merit of Jesus a sufficiency of His merit to make up for the imperfections and shortcomings; and so of this entire class – "the Church of the First-borns." The imputation of this merit to the Church as separate and apart from the world engages and obligates that merit for awhile in making good the imperfections of the flesh of the Church, so as to permit this class to offer to God a justified, and, therefore, an acceptable sacrifice.

But this is merely imputed or loaned to the Church, because the Church does not wish to keep the earthly rights of Jesus. The Church wishes to sacrifice its all and thus to follow the example of Jesus. And the great High Priest imputes to them enough of His merit to make the Church's offering acceptable when offered by the High Priest. When all of the Church of the First-borns shall have attained to the rewards of the spirit nature, all of the merit of the High Priest, Jesus, will be released, so far as they are concerned – the whole amount will again be free in the hands of Justice, as it was when Jesus ascended up on high.

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Question. – Would it be correct to say that the merit of Christ cannot be compared to a garment or robe until after consecration?

Answer. – A robe is a covering. The wedding robe of the parable represents our Lord's merit imputed to His people as a covering for their blemishes or imperfections of the flesh. This robe takes

cognizance of the Church as the prospective Bride who acknowledges the Headship of Jesus her Lord. Another figure represents the members of the Church as wearing white robes and hoods or bonnets, the illustration of the under-priesthood. In this figure the priests represent the brethren or Body members and indicate that they are not independent, but under and subject to the Headship of Jesus.

The robe of Christ's righteousness imputed to the Church as a covering for her blemishes and to make her acceptable gives place to or becomes transformed into a robe of her own righteousness, in the resurrection. As our Lord Jesus is represented as robed in white linen, so the Bride is pictured as arrayed in fine linen, "the righteousness of the saints." The imputed robe merely covers our fleshly blemishes and imperfections in the present time.

The new body which God will give us in the resurrection will be perfect of itself and need no imputation of the merit of Jesus. The spirit body of those who will attain to the "first resurrection" will be absolute, complete, perfect, as was the resurrection body of Jesus. The robe of Christ's righteousness, imputed to cover our fleshly imperfections, we will need no more, because we will no longer have the fleshly imperfections.

The new robe is said to be embroidered. And this figure carries with it our endeavors at the present time to develop the character-likeness of Jesus – to perfection, in the spirit. As we read, "It (the New Creature, the soul) is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown in dishonor, raised in glory; it is sown an animal body (needing the imputation of Jesus' merit); it is raised a spirit body" (in full possession of a merit of its own).

Question. – Will any of those found worthy of a place in the Bride company wear Christ's robe of righteousness?

Answer. – We understand that all who make the consecration do so and are accepted, in one hope of their calling, and that that one hope is the hope of being a member of the Bride class and joint-heir with Christ. The fact that there will be a "great company" is a special favor ordained of the Lord in the interest of those who do not prove sufficiently zealous to be counted in with Jesus as "more than conquerors."

The "great company" of Revelation 7:9 is composed of such as fail to come up to the highest standard of sacrifice required of the Lord, but who, nevertheless, will prove not unfaithful in their final test. These are said to have not kept their garments unspotted from the world; hence the requirement that they shall wash them in the blood of the Lamb – prove their loyalty under discipline and stress, having failed to prove it by voluntary obedience unto sacrifice. Thus both the Bride and her virgins who follow her all wear the Bridegroom's robe (justification) in the present life. And all in the future life will attain perfection on their own account.

This imputed robe will not be needed by the "great company" after they shall have experienced their "change" to the spirit condition; for they, too, will be changed, in a moment and thereafter possess an individual perfection of their own.

Question. – Will not the Church when she shall have passed under the veil have all the merit of Christ in her hand to put on the mercy-seat?

Answer. – No; the Church has nothing whatever to do with atoning for sin, even as the under-priests had nothing whatever to do with the presentations of the Day of Atonement blood on the propitiatory.

A correct view of the matter, we believe, is this: The High Priest, Jesus, ascended on high and made imputation of His merit to the

Church. Those who waited in the "upper room" for the Pentecostal blessing had presented themselves before God, desiring to be accepted of Him as sacrifices. They did not sacrifice themselves, they merely presented themselves for sacrifice. Thus we read, "I beseech you, brethren, that you *present* your bodies living sacrifices." The presentation matter is ours, not the Lord's; the acceptance of the offering as a sacrifice is wholly the Lord's – the High Priest's work. With the acceptance of our flesh as a sacrifice we cease to be as men and thenceforth in the sight of God and of each other we are living members of the Anointed One – the High Priest.

The High Priest accepted the Church as a whole through its presentation at Pentecost. And in harmony with the Scriptures we come into this favor or grace, which remains open until the last member of the Body of Christ shall be perfected and pass beyond the veil. The work beyond the veil will not be ours as under-priests. It will be the work of the High Priest to sprinkle the blood of the Lord's goat as He sprinkled the blood of the bullock. The figure of the "Bride" is to be distinctly eliminated in any thought of sacrifice, and is to be merely associated with the Redeemer and Bridegroom, as joint-heir in His Kingdom. The figure of the under-priests is the one which applies to the Church in respect to all sacrificial matters.

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