

## Lesson 3

### "God as Redeemer"

Redemption means to buy back. Buy back what? That which was lost, because the Lord came to save what was lost. What was lost? Mankind, the human race: "You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed without money" (Isa. 52:3).

When Adam broke God's law of love and sold the human race into slavery to sin, God could not redeem us by setting aside His law, as if winking at a minor indiscretion. God had described the demands of the law when He explained the test to Adam, "for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Even though the universe had yet to experience death, intelligent beings can understand the concept of ceasing to exist, so Adam must have had some concept of the consequences of what he was doing. What he apparently didn't appreciate was the cost of redemption and what was at stake if God did nothing. A watching universe would have misunderstood if He simply allowed them to be annihilated. The plan of redemption is a demonstration to *all* that God is love, and that He relates to His creation selflessly regardless of their behavior.

Bad as sin is, it was not its "badness" that required the Creator Himself to solve the problem. Jesus said He came to fulfill the law, not to abolish it. The only way to fulfill the demands of a transgressed law was death, the second or permanent death. Jesus called everything else sleep (see John 11:11).

One of the foundational concepts presented by the 1888 "messengers" (Jones and Waggoner), and supported by Ellen G. White, is that Christ has *already* accomplished something for every human being. He died the second death for "every man," and thus elected "all men" to be saved. In that sense, it is true that "He saved the world" (see *Ten Great Gospel Truths that Make the 1888 Message Unique*, pp. 1-4).

After the Fall the angels were in anguish over what had happened to Adam and Eve. "The angels prostrated themselves before him. They offered their lives. Jesus said to them that he should by his death save many; that the life of an angel could not pay the debt. His life alone could be accepted of his Father as a ransom for man" (*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 46).

It was not possible for a created being to accomplish what Christ did. Somehow the mysterious combining of humanity with divinity that occurred at the incarnation was

necessary. By this process of the incarnation, Christ assumed the "likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3). In that flesh, He lived the sinless life which the law demands and then, in Him, took humanity to the cross where the second demand of the law, the penalty of the second death, was accomplished. Divinity did not die, that was not possible, but the humanity He assumed did. "Was the human nature of the Son of Mary changed into the divine nature of the Son of God? No, the two natures were mysteriously blended in one person--the Man Christ Jesus. In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. When Christ was crucified, it was His human nature that died. Deity did not sink and die; that would have been impossible" (*The Upward Look*, p. 260).

But without the resurrection, the cross was simply a legal transaction which could not provide life to the human race. "After His resurrection He met the disciples, and said unto them, 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.' ... Their sole work thenceforth was to be witnesses of His resurrection and of its power. The power of the resurrection is according to the Spirit of holiness, for it was by the Spirit that He was raised. The power given to make men holy is the power that raised Jesus from the dead" (*Waggoner on Romans*, p. 1.13)

This should not lead to the mistake of thinking the 1888 "messengers" taught that all will be saved just because all were redeemed from the penalty of sin. Christ actually tasted the second death "for everyone," and made propitiation for the "sins of the whole world" (Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2). Therefore, he has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim. 1:10). For whom has He brought life? For all men. For whom has He also brought immortality? For those who believe. These are repeatedly presented in scripture, the most recognized verse being John 3:16: For God so loved the *world* that He gave His only begotten Son." Notice Christ was given to the entire world. But, only "whoever *believes* in Him [Christ the Messiah] should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God will not force anyone to be saved against their will. Though the entire human race was in Christ, all are not faithful to their position in Him. Even though this new life is accomplished for everyone, many spurn it and throw it away, preferring to depend on their own plan for their lives. What a tragedy! What more can God do for them than to give them over to their own choice. This is the wrath of God which is described: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18).

Christ was not exposed to God's wrath at the cross to appease His anger toward sinners. It was love, *agape*, that motivated the Godhead to redeem mankind. We are told that Christ died not to appease God and make Him love us, but the Godhead agreed to the plan of redemption because of Their great love for us. "Christ was the medium through which He

could pour out His infinite love upon a fallen world. 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself' (2 Cor. 5:19)" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 13).

--*Arlene Hill*