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THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S FIRST COMING.

"For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Mark 10:45.

If there is one thing in all the teachings of Jesus which He seeks to make clear it is the purpose of His coming into the world. His purpose was not like that of Mohammed, to set up a kingdom by force. He said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Neither did He come to judge the world. That will be done by Him when He comes a second time. Nor was his purpose merely that of a social reformer. The correction of wrongs existing in society was to follow as a by-product of His mission. Nor did He come like the prophets of old, like John the Baptist, to point to another Savior from sin. But His purpose was himself to bring salvation from sin. His mission was to effect this salvation himself. Repeatedly, and in different words Jesus expresses the purpose of His first coming. See Luke 19:10; John 10:10. In the first two gospels are found these words expressing the purpose of His coming: "For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Here Jesus calls himself the "Son of man," a favorite expression used by him some 80 times in the gospels. At first glance this expression seems to be used to describe only the human element in the person of Jesus, but a closer study reveals the fact that "it suggests both the divine and the human. The term Son of man is not original to the New Testament, but is found in Messianic portions of the book of Daniel to express Messiahship. Hence, no doubt, Jesus chose this term because it was indicative of his Messiahship, and this particular name above the other names for the Messiah given in the Old Testament because it identified him with mankind; as is well expressed by Stalker, "It gave expression to his sense of connection with all men, in sympathy, fortunes and destiny. He felt himself to be identified with all as their brother, fellow sufferer, their representative and champion."

Two words, in substance, express the purpose of the coming of the Son of man. The one is service and the second is sacrifice. His was a matchless ministry of service and a unique and glorious sacrifice. He came in fulfillment of the prophecy of the suffering Servant of Jehovah. His matchless ministry is sketched in the gospel of Mark. This evangelist answers the question as to how He ministered, as he vividly sets forth the preaching, teaching and healing of Jesus.

In the gospel of Luke, chapter four, the ministry of Jesus is summarized by Jesus himself in the words of the prophet Isaiah. Preaching in his home town of Nazareth the Servant of Jehovah in the person of Jesus of Nazareth said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind. To set at liberty them that are bruised, To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." In general his ministry was to the poor, to those without wealth, influence, position, honors—to the lowly and afflicted. He ever had in mind the misery of the masses, the poor widow, the leper, as well as the high and mighty ones. He rendered a matchless service to those in bondage, to the blinded, and to the bruised.

In the spirit of the Master ^{the} gospel minister carries the good news to all classes and conditions of people. He tells the poor of the riches of love in Christ Jesus, of Him who for their sakes became poor, that they through his poverty might become rich. To the captive of sin he proclaims that there is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. To the blinded he has a message of Jesus, the Light of the world. To the broken-hearted he has a message of comfort, "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me." To all he proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord. This good news is offered right now, and it is urgent that it be accepted without delay.

In Matthew's gospel also, we have a wonderful view of the matchless ministry of him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister. Look, for instance, at chapter nine of his gospel and see the "loving sympathy and human helpfulness of Jesus." Then the closing paragraph of this chapter gives a concise summary of what Jesus did, what he saw, how he felt, and what he said. Here we see the feet of Jesus going about doing good, and the eyes of Jesus looking upon the multitudes. We are drawn near to the heart of Jesus, as he was moved with compassion because the multitudes were distressed and scattered. And we hear his voice speaking to his disciples, and calling upon them to pray.

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"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." We have taken a look at his matchless service. Let us now consider his glorious sacrifice. "And to give his life a ransom for many" speaks volumes to the lost sinner. While it tells the primary purpose of Christ's coming into the world-He came to die-it is telling him of sin and salvation, the heart of the gospel.

The word "ransom" implies that a debt has been incurred. The wages of sin must be paid to satisfy divine justice. The debt made by our first parents is binding upon the whole human race. The universality of sin is declared in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and is evidenced in all human history. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." "The wages of sin is death."

The Son of man was the only one qualified to pay the ransom for sin.

"There was no other good enough, To pay the price of sin,
He only could unlock the gate Of heaven and let us in."

He was divine, human, sinless. It took his perfect life and his atoning death. He humbled himself becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross. We being left to the freedom of our own will, contracted the debt. He, because of his wonderful love, assumed our debt, and paid the penalty with his own life's blood.

We are told that when Henry Clay ran for president of the United States he spent a large sum of money in the campaign. He made arrangements with a bank in Lexington, Ky., to draw on it for just as much money as he desired. During this presidential campaign he contracted an enormous debt running up into thousands of dollars, a big sum for that day. After this man, who said he would rather be right than president, had lost the race two of his friends went to the bank in Lexington and inquired the amount of Clay's indebtedness. The cashier refused at first to tell them, as this was a private affair. But they told the banker that they were friends of Clay, and desired to pay the debt. Then they were taken into an inner room of the bank building, where all of Clay's indebtedness was summed up. The two men then opened up some big sacks of money and paid the entire debt. A few days later Henry Clay himself went to see the banker to try to arrange to pay at least a part of the debt. He was told that he owed the bank nothing. Clay thought the banker was joking, and insisted that he was serious and meant business. The banker then told him of the two friends who had paid the entire debt. For some time Clay could not believe it. Then, upon realizing what had been done for him, he was completely overwhelmed with gratitude for what had been done for him.

At the cross Jesus paid the price of sin. Jesus paid it all. It was your sin and mine that nailed Him to the cross. Jesus, the one perfect man, was classed with criminals; He was stripped of his clothes, mocked and scourged. His physical, mental, and spiritual sufferings were such as none other has ever known. At the same time his was a love that passeth knowledge. "He gave himself a ransom for many." Are you and I included in the many, through our simple acceptance by faith of the fact, the meaning, and the message of the Cross?

"We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.

O dearly, dearly has He loved:
And we must love Him, too,
And trust in His redeeming blood,
And try His works to do.

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