

# The Bible Student.

CONTINUING

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It is not without significance that the chapter on Holy Scripture stands

**The Vital Question for Bible Students.**

first in the Westminster Symbols. Its position indicates the fundamental relation existing between one's doctrine of Scripture and the other articles of his faith. Perhaps the most vital question at present confronting the student of the Bible is—What think you of the Scriptures themselves? Our attitude towards the Book can hardly fail decisively to affect our attitude towards its several statements. Unquestionably one who regards it as a *revelation of the mind of man* concerning himself, the world, its author, its origin, and its destiny, may still find the Bible an interesting, and even a very important book. But, obviously, he will, in the very nature of things, take up towards it an attitude wholly different from one who esteems it to be a *revelation of the mind of God* upon these several points. Even as a record of what men have believed concerning God, and what duties they have conceived themselves as owing to God, the Bible will always occupy a conspicuous place in the history of the development of the human mind, and partic-

ularly of the so-called religious instincts of man.

Viewed in this light, however, the Bible at once takes its place alongside of other similar

**An Effect to be Considered.**

records. Its statements are at once stripped of the element of finality—except for those who think that in religious matters the human mind reached the acme of its development some two thousand years ago. Further, its statements will have only a relative value, and command only a qualified assent and reverence. A stream cannot rise higher than its source. If the Bible be a revelation of the minds of its various authors, it will command assent and reverence only in proportion as we may esteem its several authors to have been qualified to deal with the large and intricate problems that they have assumed to handle. We may at our pleasure, add to, subtract from, modify, or even wholly set aside what they have to say. We would, of course, do this with that courtesy of phrase that is characteristic of our advanced and cultured age; but to expect us to refrain from doing it, would be to require us to lay aside that intellect-

record which is left us. A shadow was over the whole scene;—foes were busy and the people indifferent, but an essential noble preparation was going on for the dark days now close at hand.

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## HOW SINS ARE TAKEN AWAY.

A STUDY OF JOHN I. 29, AND XI. 17.

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We have in these two passages the words of John the Baptist and of Jesus. One is couched in the phrase of Old Testament symbology; the other in the literalism of New Testament fulfilment.

It was eminently fitting that the last of the Old Testament prophets should call attention to the Messiah as the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." It is noticeable that in all the records of Christ's sojourn on earth it is only he who so designates him. Paul once speaks of him as our passover; Peter once as a lamb without spot or blemish; and John in Revelation twenty-seven times as the lamb of God. The lamb, of all sacrificable beasts, is especially the symbol of the Christ.

John the Baptist doubtless had in mind the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which is undoubtedly messianic—the Prophet there predicts of the Messiah that "he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter;" "Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" "thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." Godet says: "Before the polemic against the Christians had driven the Jewish interpreters to another explanation, they did not hesitate to apply that sublime representation to the Messiah. Abarbanel says expressly, 'Jonathan the son of Uziel referred this prophecy to the Messiah who was to come, and this is also the opinion of our sages of blessed memory.' . . . It was the prevalent opinion among the ancient Jews."

John plainly regards the sacrifices of the old dispensation as only typical. Jesus is the lamb which taketh away sins. The Epistle to the Hebrews clearly teaches us that the blood of these sacrifices which were offered continually could not make the worshipper perfect as pertaineth to the conscience. "They could not

take away sins." They were carnal ordinances sanctifying to the purifying of the flesh only. They taught that into the holiest, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, access could be had only by a better sacrifice than these.

It should be noticed, too, that John proclaimed a Saviour for the Gentiles when he pointed to Jesus as the lamb of God which taketh away the sin *of the world*. Is Jehovah the God of the Jews only? Is he not God of the Gentiles also? Asks Paul.

An interesting question is pertinent here. Is it meant that all the sins of all men are taken away—that all men are saved? The shortest answer is to be had by reference to the type. Take the Passover lamb for illustration. When the angel of destruction passed over Egypt, it was not the lamb *available* that redeemed the first-born from destruction but the lamb of which faith availed itself to sprinkle its blood upon the lintel of the door. So Jesus crucified is by God's grace available for the whole world, but avails to save only such as receive him by faith.

What knowledge of the plan of salvation was conveyed to the Jews by means of sacrifices? We, from the standpoint of historical fulfilment, can clearly see the place of the sacrifice for foreshadowing a perfected redemption, but the knowledge of the Jew must have been fragmentary. He did see that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins. The spiritual Israel trusted the promises of God, and looked for the advent of the Messiah? But it is not likely that they clearly discerned that the anti-typical lamb must not only be slain, but must also return to life. The words of Jesus: Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again—must have puzzled his immediate disciples, for we are expressly told that they understood none of these things.

It is not strange that Old Testament types do not foreshadow the resurrection. The lamb once slain could not be brought again to life. *Perhaps* there is a hint of resurrection in the ritual for the cleansing of lepers. Of two birds one only is slain, and the other sprinkled with the blood of the first, and in a manner identified with it, is set free. So, too, on the great day of atonement, the two goats evidently are regarded as one sacrifice—the "two kids of the goats for a sin offering." Only one is slain 'for a sin offering,' but the other is "presented alive before the Lord to make an

atonement with him;" the high priest confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel; and it is released in the wilderness. The meaning of the ritual is confessedly obscure, but a reference to the resurrection of the sacrifice seems to the writer to be intimated.

Paul wrote: If Christ be not risen ye are yet in your sins. Jesus declared that he laid down his life in order that he might take it again, and also that his Father loved him because of the purpose he had in view in laying down his life. What is meant by his life? Manifestly not his existence: being divine he could not cease to exist. But he had taken to himself a human body. Death is the severance of soul and body, and having dismissed his Spirit from the body, on the third day he reanimated that body. And it was *in order to* do this that he died. It is plain that the taking away of sin is not consummated by the death of Christ. Not only did not the death of the literal lamb take away sins, but the death of Jesus, the lamb of God, does not suffice. Paul's statement is sufficient when he says that if Christ be not risen ye are yet in your sins, and also when he writes that for our justification he was raised. Ingenuity can devise no intelligible reason why the death or blood of Jesus should secure the forgiveness of sins. God does not find in suffering a compensation for sins. Death is a just and natural penalty for sin. The end for which Christ died was that he might rise again; and he rose again that we might be justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses.

But, if resurrection was the end, death was the means. Resurrection was in order to justification, and death was in order to resurrection. There is then perfect propriety in speaking of the blood of Jesus as cleansing us from all sin, but the statement is in terms of Old Testament symbology.

There is not only a natural, but a moral reason why Christ's death was the means of his resurrection. He said: I have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it again. He had the power to take it again because he was sinless. He had fulfilled all righteousness. He was obedient in all things even unto death. The sole merit and power of his death was its obedience. Therefore, we are told expressly God hath highly honored the man Jesus. He could not be holden of death because he was the

holy and righteous one. God could not suffer his holy one to see corruption. The resumption of his human life was then the direct consequence of his obedience as a man even to the penal law of death.

What now is the significance of this resumed human life of Jesus? What is the significance of death? Death is the penalty for sin; life, that is not liable to death, means acceptance with God. Christ dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him; his resumed human life is then everlasting life.

What to us is the significance of Christ's resumed human life? It was not for himself that he took human nature, in it died and in it rose again. Not for himself was it necessary to do this that the Father might love him. Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life *for the sheep*. He was delivered for *our* offences and raised again for *our* justification. He took fellowship with the race in flesh and blood and the penalty of death. So it was "he tasted death for every man;" so it was "he made propitiation not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world." He is available, therefore, for the sin of the world. To as many as receive him, even to them who believe on his name, he gives the right to become the sons of God. He gives them fellowship with himself in his Spirit—which they that believe on Him do receive. Union with himself means fellowship with him in his post-mortem life. Scripture here is emphatic: God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; he that hath the Son hath life. Ah! Christ is *our* life. Because he lives the believer lived. Christ can die—come under penalty—no more. Neither can the Christian: for him death is not penal, but the door of heaven.

Is it not plain now—how it is that resurrection consummates the forgiveness of sin—the taking away of sin. Life eternal is favor with God; it is the negation of condemnation. Life is inclusive of the taking away of sins. Mortality, liability to death, sins therefore, are swallowed up of life. Arminianism is short-sighted; it does not see the larger category—life. Nor does it see that the righteousness which earned the life is ours by imputation, since the life itself is ours.

And so the New Testament discourses largely of life. Life there is a very different thing from the life which some theolo-

gians say is necessary to the exercise of faith. "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye *might have life* through his name." Jno. xx. 31. To the Pharisees Jesus said: Ye will not come unto me *that ye may have life*. "The promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. i. 1. "When Christ who is our life shall appear." Col. iii. 4.

Christ Jesus atoned for our sins by death, but had he never survived death, there had been no eternal life for us:—no forgiveness of sin.