

# Set Free by Jesus

*...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 1 Peter 1:18-19*

The concept of redemption is so vast and inclusive that it is frequently used in the Bible to summarize the whole work of salvation (Rev. 5:9; Heb. 9:12). Our redemption has been completed, based on the finished work of Christ (Eph. 1:7), and yet it is something we also look forward to at the final resurrection—the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14, 4:30).

## **What is Redemption?**

Redemption is liberation, freedom and rescue from slavery to a thing or person. In some form, redemption (e.g. redeem, redeemer) is prominent in the Bible, mentioned over 150 times, and theologians throughout the history of the church have tried to understand its meaning, sometimes reading too much into the metaphor of the Roman slave market. The apostles and writers of the New Testament were predominately Jewish, steeped in their Old Testament, and that is where redemption begins.

## **Redemption in the Old Testament**

And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: ‘I am Yahveh; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Ex. 6:5-6 cf. Ex. 15:13; Dt. 7:9; 1 Chron. 17:21; Ps. 77:14, 111:9; Micah 6:4

God did not pay off the Egyptians to deliver and redeem Israel, but His outstretched arm and mighty hand indicate the greatness of the Exodus. In addition to freeing the nation from Egyptian slavery, we see another aspect of redemption when God passed over the firstborn of households that made a sacrifice to redeem themselves. God claimed the right to every firstborn: the first born of the animals was Yahveh’s, and firstborn sons had to be redeemed by a sacrifice offered in their place to remember that God killed the firstborn in Egypt (Ex. 13:11-16). The entire Passover event and ritual emphasized that God did not redeem the people because they were righteous or better than the Egyptians, but because they were His beloved people. In addition, in the Old Testament a kinsman-redeemer could liberate people or property that fell into bondage (Lev. 25:25-8; Ruth 3-4; Jer. 32:6-8). In all of these cases, someone paid a costly ransom to free animals from slaughter, property from mortgage, or people from slavery.

Although Israel was redeemed from slavery in Egypt and given the promise land, she rebelled against Yahveh, fell into sin and bondage, and therefore looked to Him again and again for redemption:

Here we are, servants today! And the land that you gave to our fathers, to eat its fruit and its bounty, here we are, servants in it! And it yields much increase to the kings you have

set over us, because of our sins; also they have dominion over our bodies and our cattle at their pleasure; and we are in great distress. Nehemiah 9:36-37

This cry for redemption characterized the life of Israel in exile, restoration and during the inter-testamental period (Ez. 36:24-5, 28; Tobit 14:5-7).

### **Redemption in the New Testament**

God delivered His people many times, and when Jesus shows up in the New Testament we see that those who welcome Him do so as a great redeemer (Lk. 2:38, 1:67-72, 24:21). But instead of being the great socio-political Messiah-King that everyone wanted, Jesus kept equating himself with the ransom payment of redemption (Mk. 10:45; Mt. 20:28). The two disciples on the road to Emmaus were very devastated that Jesus hadn't redeemed Israel in the way they supposed He would (Lk. 24:21). But after spending time with the risen Jesus, the disciples came to understand the free gift of redemption in its true fullness as liberation from sin and all its effects:

- Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:12
- ...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 1 Peter 1:18-19
- But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for *all have sinned and fall short* of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Romans 3:21-24
- Christ has redeemed us from the *curse of the law*, having become a curse for us for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." Galatians 3:13
- He has delivered us from *the power of darkness* and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14
- For while we were living in the flesh, our *sinful passions, aroused by the law*, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code. Rom. 7:5-6
- Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

The truth of redemption found in Christ confronted and transformed the Roman world. Freedom from the slavery of sin resulted in the abolition of slavery to men; freedom from sexual bondage resulted in women's liberation and honor; and freedom from selfishness allowed Christians to give themselves to the poor and needy. In Christ we live and offer this message of redemption to a world waiting to be liberated.