
Redemption; a definition and depiction of Exodus 12 & selected passages

Introduction

Charles Wesley set to music words I pray will be ours as a result of this message.

O for a heart to praise my God!

A heart from sin set free

A heart that always feels thy blood

So freely spilt for me”.

Tonight we start a series called “Words of our Salvation”. This series is intended to make clear the reality behind key theological terms such as 1) Redemption 2) Propitiation 3) Reconciliation 4) Justification 5) Regeneration 6) Sanctification. And so, for the next six weeks we will teach in the evening on these topics with an aim to increase understanding over these terms.

But our preaching hardly rests when we merely can accurately define theological terms. I came across an exhortation in Deut.4 that I will be using throughout this message. Moses was reminding the people that the Lord alone is God when he said, “Has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation...by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm...that you might know that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him...and knowing this, therefore, [you are to take this teaching] and lay it upon your hearts”. (Deut.4:32-39)

We aim, through this series, not merely to inform but to plead with all of you to so “lay it upon your hearts” that you will flee sin and cherish the Christ you see in these theological topics.

Tonight’s topic is REDEMPTION.

I want to do two things with this topic.

1. First, we will *take up the definition of redemption*. We want each of us thinking clearly and biblically over this term.
2. Second, we will *take in the depiction of redemption*. The Bible also communicates the wonder and beauty and power of Jesus Christ and His redemption through imagery. We will look at the most memorable and oldest of the sacrificial feasts of Israel; the Passover.

Let’s begin with a working definition.

Taking up the definition

Redemption is similar to salvation in that it talks about saving from or rescuing out evil and danger. But it is more specific in that it denotes the means by which salvation is achieved. It emphasizes the payment of a ransom. It stresses a setting free from oppression by means of some sort of expense. For example, according to Leviticus 25 if a man lost his inheritance through debt or sold himself into slavery, he and his property could be “redeemed” if a near relative came forward to provide the redemption price (see Lev.25:25-27, 47-54). This legislation is played out through narrative in the book of Ruth (see chapter 4).

A prime example of redemption is God’s deliverance of his people from Egypt (Ex.6:6f). “through an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment” the LORD brought them out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and delivered them from slavery. We also see this picture in the breaking free from the Babylonian captivity. The language of redemption is used in connection with their release (Jer.31:11; 50:33-34).

With this as a rich picture of redemption we come to the New Testament. Listen for the themes of redemption as I list some N.T scripture. The Bible says:

- “Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin” Jn.8:34
- “sold under sin” Rom.7:14
- “slaves of sin” Rom.6:17
- “For the wages of sin is death” Rom.6:23

Sinners are enslaved to sin and are obedient to master sin and the law. Sin tells the sinner what to do by promising the sinner a bit of what he wants. But the price tag of what is promised is oppression and agony and hopelessness and hell. Left to himself, the sinner stays in the state of slavery and ends in condemnation and death. In Moses’ day the people of Israel “groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help” (Ex.2:23). As Psalm 78:35 says, they needed not merely relief. They needed “the Most High their Redeemer”.

Leon Morris, a N.T. scholar says:

“Redemption means deliverance from some evil by payment of a price...it is the idea of freedom secured by payment... It is the price paid to release slaves and let the condemned go free”. Are we beginning to see the provision and person of the Lord Jesus in this definition? Listen carefully to these passages in order to see Him more clearly (slides of Mk.10:45; 1Peter 1:18,19; Revelation 5:9).

Jesus' life of ministry terminated in a freely outpoured life on the cross; a self-sacrifice that served as a ransom for the many who needed to be rescued from this present evil age (Gal.1:4), who needed to be redeemed from the curse of the law (Gal.3:13), who needed to be set free from the penalty and power of sin (Gal.5:1).

What the people of the 1st century needed is what the people of the 21st century need; "Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed" (1Cor.5:7b).

Redemption is the price paid [i.e. Jesus' death] to release slaves [i.e. sinners in bondage to sin] and let the condemned go free [i.e. glad-hearted worship]!

Taking in the depiction

With this as an introduction to redemption, let's now view this truth in one of the most dramatic analogies of redemption in the Bible. Turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus 12.

In Exodus 12 we come to the most unforgettable of the sacrificial feasts of Israel. We come to the Passover. Vividly presented in the ritual was God's way of deliverance out of Egypt and bondage into glorious freedom and worship.

This first Passover, you will recall, goes back to the time when the children of Israel were under the control of cruel taskmasters for many years. At last they cried to God for help and the Lord heard their groaning (Ex.2:23-25).

In remembrance of His covenant with Abraham, God promised to redeem His people and to bring them into their own land (Ex. 6:2-9). Moses was raised up to lead the people but Pharaoh would not let the people go. Therefore, God sent plague after plague upon Egypt to demonstrate His power so that His reputation may be proclaimed in all the earth (Ex.9:16).

The way of this deliverance, the way the LORD portrayed his redemption of His people, is taken up in chapter 12 of Exodus. Each household in Israel was commanded on the tenth day of the month to choose a lamb "without blemish", a male of the first year (vv.1-5). The animal was to be kept for four days and then on the fourteenth day, the head of the house was to kill the lamb in the evening (v.6). After killing the lamb, they were to apply the blood by sprinkling it with hyssop on the doorposts and lintel of their houses (v.7). This accomplished, they were all to go inside and remain there until morning.

What they were to do with the flesh of the lamb is also talked about in vv. 8-20. The lamb was roasted and eaten around the family table. Unleavened bread and bitter herbs were also part of the meal. It was all to be eaten quickly while they were fully clothed with sandals on their feet and a staff in hand. The Lord would see the blood and pass over the house leaving everyone in the house safe and sound (vv.21-23)

While they were observing this meal, God the destroyer passed over the land and the first born of every Egyptian family was slain. Wailing throughout the land was heard by all. Horror gripped Pharaoh leading him to let the people of Israel go free (vv.24-32)

Israel began their exodus immediately. With their flocks and herds and gifts of gold and silver from their taskmasters, with unleavened bread they started their journey. God laid bare his holy arm to protect His people and lead them through the Red Sea. When all were safe on the other shore, the waters returned and covered the pursuing enemy (vv.33-14:31) William Dumbrell captured the dual nature of redemption well by saying that, “it is both a supreme act of judgment and yet a great act of deliverance”.

God’s people were free at last! And as a result of this redemption, they sang a song to the LORD (Exodus 15).

Here is my case for tonight. If we are to take the biblical teaching of redemption and “lay it upon our hearts” we need to do two things.

1. We need to behold the Lamb of God.
2. We need to benefit from the Lamb of God.

Beholding the Lamb of God

In His Perfections

v.5

We start beholding the Lamb of God who takes away sin by noticing His perfections. In v.5 we see the picture of Christ as “without blemish”. There was no sin in Jesus Christ. The awful punishment laid upon Him was due not to His own sinful stain. Jesus is pictured here as perfect and faultless and wonderful. This sacrifice is the only sacrifice which could be offered on behalf of our rebellion. He lived in perfect obedience so to give the Father a sacrifice “without blemish” and pay for the sins of His people.

If we are to take the biblical teaching of redemption and “lay it upon our hearts” tonight we must notice with utter admiration His perfections.

In His Precision

vv.3,6

Not only do we see Christ’s perfections in the first Passover, notice vv.3,6. We see that the ancients were to take a lamb on the 10th day and keep it until the 14th day. This exactly corresponds to Jesus Christ. He entered the city of Jerusalem four days before the Passover with one thing on His mind. With precision He was carrying out the plan of God to ransom His people with His own blood. God wants us to see Christ Jesus everywhere in this passage.

If we are to take the biblical teaching of redemption and “lay it upon our hearts” tonight we must notice with utter amazement His precision.

In His Passion

v.6

Jesus Christ; the Lamb of God who takes away sin, is in view here at the first Passover. We see His perfections, His Precision and now we come to verse six and see His Passion. Jesus Christ was killed to pay the ransom to set the captives free. The act of Christ slaughtered for our treason was extreme and horrible. His passion; the killing of the Lamb, contained the greatest punishment because it agreed with all the despair which the sins of His people deserved. This is why the Scriptures call this killing not simply death but a cutting off from His beloved Father, a casting away from His glorious Father, a treading under foot by His awesome Father! It is called a curse, a heaping up of sorrows and the most ghastly and dreadful type of death; namely crucifixion. (cf. Isa.53; Ps.22; Jn.19:16)

If we are to take the biblical teaching of redemption and “lay it upon our hearts” tonight we must notice with utter aghast His passion.

Benefiting from the Lamb of God

It is good from time to time to ask the question, “Are we a people who can sing, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation’” (Rev.5:9). Oh the precious person and blood of Jesus Christ. How his life and death and resurrection are all we need to be ransomed from our sin and the curse of the law and to be brought to God cleansed and free! The once for all sacrifice of Jesus did it all. Let us sing. Let us sing. Hallelujah!

Now Exodus 12 tells us more than merely to behold the Passover Lamb. In order to benefit from God's provision 7 applications of faith are needed.

7 Applications of Faith

Apply the blood

vv.7,22

As seen in the Passover, it was not enough for the lamb to have had its blood shed. The blood was to "be put on". This signifies the personal application by faith of Jesus' crucifixion. The "bunch of hyssop" may correspond to faith. Dipping into the precious, blood-bought promises of God by faith, we are to benefit from the Passover Lamb. We understand, in the words of Romans 3:24f, that "redemption that is in Christ Jesus" is "to be received by faith".

If we are to take the biblical teaching of redemption and "lay it upon our hearts" tonight we must receive the blood of Christ by faith.

Constant Feeding

v.8

The second application of faith is noticed in verse 8. This verse instructs us to do something that was awful to the eyes of 1st century people who tagged along with Jesus just as it is unpopular with 21st century people who tag along with Jesus. "They shall eat the flesh of the lamb" typifies constant nourishing our souls on Christ. According to Jesus in John 6, His flesh is true food; His blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on Jesus by faith abides in him. The Christian faith is not a one time exercise and then its done. It is a lifestyle of constant need for nourishing our souls through communion with Christ.

If we are to take the biblical teaching of redemption and "lay it upon our hearts" tonight we must feed upon Christ moment by moment by faith.

Accepting all of Christ

vv.9,10

The third application of faith can be seen in verse 9. The lamb was to be eaten fully. The Israelites were not permitted to be picky at what they wanted to eat and what they wanted to discard. They were to eat of the lamb completely and absolutely. What does this say to the Christian whose heart needs to take in the term "redemption"? Using John Piper's words, "Jesus will not be domesticated. But people still try. There seems to be something about this man for everybody. So we pick and choose in a way that shows he is on our side. All over the world, having Jesus on your side is a good thing. But not the original, undomesticated, unadjusted Jesus. Just the revised Jesus who fits our religion or political platform or lifestyle".

If we are to take the biblical teaching of redemption and “lay it upon our hearts” tonight we must cease treating Jesus as a smorgasbord. We cannot enjoy His Crown if we do not take up His Cross. We must take Him in just as He is; the “original, undomesticated, unadjusted” biblical Jesus.

Remember from where we came

v.8

The fourth application of faith is noticed in a couple of words in v.8. The ancients were to eat the lamb “with bitter herbs”. This was to assist them in remembering year by year what happened in Egypt. Ex.1:14 tells us that the Egyptians “made their lives bitter...made them work as slaves”. We are to see here that in order for Christ to be seen as better sin must be seen as bitter. We must remember from where we came lest when troubles and trials and temptations visit us, our old way of life begins to look good. As the Apostle Paul told the Ephesians, “Remember your former way of life”, so too we must remember from where we came. We must never forget that the passing pleasures of sin are a banquet in the grave. Sin is bitter not better.

If we are to take the biblical teaching of redemption and “lay it upon our hearts” tonight we must never forget from where we came.

Forsake the old life

v.11

The fifth application of faith can be observed in v.11. “In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste”. They are to high tail out of Egypt and never look back. Jesus said concerning the cost of discipleship, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Lk.9:62). Beloved, “remember Lot’s wife” when she looked back became a pillar of salt (Gen.19:26). This exercise of faith is similar to the fourth one. The difference is that in “forsaking the old life” we understand that there are no options. We cannot go back; for there is nothing there. We have but one option and that is by faith to persevere.

If we are to take the biblical teaching of redemption and “lay it upon our hearts” tonight we must resolve by faith to forsake our old life.

Live without hypocrisy

vv.18-20

The sixth application of faith is found in vv.18-20. It talks about eating unleavened bread. For seven days they were not to have any leaven in their homes or in their bread. This memorial corresponds to a life without hypocrisy. Paul picks up on this imagery in 1Cor.5 as he talked about Christ our Passover lamb. He said, “Let us therefore celebrate the Passover lamb not with the old leaven of malice and evil but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”.

Living without hypocrisy is not the same as living without sinning. We still sin and that is precisely why we are talking about redemption tonight. We need the Passover lamb! His once for all ransom continues to pay for every sin we ever commit. And so, it is not as though we must be sinless to enjoy the benefits of our Redeemer. Vv.18-20 typify the need to be genuine. Redemption teaches us to be real. We must forsake facades. We must do away with faking.

If we are to take the biblical teaching of redemption and “lay it upon our hearts” tonight we must live without hypocrisy.

Give reasons for our faith

vv.26-27

And finally, the seventh application of faith can be observed in vv.26,27. It says that when the children inquired about the Passover, the Israelites were to have reasons for their faith. Could it be that the Lord had them do this in order to instruct us tonight? That we are to see our need to give reason for our faith is verified by Peter who talked much about “the precious blood of the lamb”. When people see that our Passover Lamb; Jesus Christ, gives us hope amid troubling times, they will ask us for reasons for this hope (cf. 1Peter 1:18f; 3:15). We must be ready to speak of the wonder and beauty and power of the blood of Christ applied by the Spirit through faith to our lives.

If we are to take the biblical teaching of redemption and “lay it upon our hearts” tonight we must be ready to give reasons for our faith.

Conclusion

Are you now better equipped to explain both the beauties and the blessings of Christ our Passover Lamb? Can you think more clearly on the doctrine of redemption? Are you ready to live out the doctrine of redemption by “laying it upon your heart”?

Please stand with me as we close by reading aloud in unison Revelation 5:9,10.

Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.