

Walking Through The Veil I: Redemption and Glory

Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, "Give them up!" and to the south, "Do not hold them back. Bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth – everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." – Isaiah 43:4-7

Redeeming Israel

Through all of Israel's ups and downs, God always had a plan for them. In Isaiah's life, he was a prophet in the lives of four different kings: Uzziah (Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. In Isaiah's ministry, he had the challenging task of prophesying about Israel going into bondage under Babylon, bondage that was brought about by Israel's rejection of God and worship of idols. While God dealt with Israel in bondage, his plan was never to leave them there, but to redeem and restore them to their land, their lives and their liberty.

While in bondage, Israel lost everything, including for some of them, their names. Coming out of the bondage, as it was with Egypt, would have been a challenge to assimilate back to life in Israel – for many of them, they knew nothing of life outside of Babylon. Therefore, it was not enough for them to just return. They needed to return with purpose, with an understanding of who they were, and what their real relationship was with God.

Redemption's View

But now, this is what the Lord says – he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned – the flames will not set you ablaze." – Isaiah 43:1-2

Before Israel went into bondage, Isaiah was already speaking of their return. In this God declared certain things over Israel:

You are Valuable

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you...

For Israel, being sent back to Israel could have been seen as the fulfillment of a time of punishment... God's wrath had been appeased, so they were "free to go". When we

go through trials of any sort, we often feel that God is meting out justice, and outside of that, we have nothing to offer. We work or serve for the sake of commandment, or for fear of reprisal. Much like driving on the freeway when there is a highway patrol near us, we fulfill the “law of the road” so we don’t get caught, but never experience the fun, the life or the freedom of driving until the officer goes another way.

God however speaks right up and declares Israel’s value to him. *I have redeemed you...* Redeeming is not a word we use regularly anymore outside of church, but it used to be very common in shopping. Coupons were redeemed for cash value, and aluminum cans were redeemed for money. *Redeeming* simply means *to buy*. Where *redeem* is used in the New Testament it refers to paying full price for an item. God was telling Israel that he knew their worth and was willing to pay the full price for them. The fact that he was willing to pay showed that Israel was not just “living punishment to punishment”, but that God truly valued Israel.

For us, when we think of how God considers us, we will usually put it in terms of how we think we measured up on the obedience chart. What God wants us to see and come to terms with is that ***he sees us as valuable to him.***

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. – John 3:16

Typically we focus on the “formula” for salvation in this statement (whoever believes in him...), but the formula is not effective without the value that God places on the world – a value so high that he was willing to pay full price for it – the price of His Son’s life.

Who do you value, and how do you demonstrate that value? What are you willing to pay or give to receive whom you value?

You Are Known

I have summoned you by name

When God created mankind, God gave him a name. When God established covenant with Abraham, he gave him a new name. We are told that in the eternal kingdom that the only ones who will be there are those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life (Revelation 21:27). For those who lost their name or their identity in bondage, God was reinforcing that *while others may not know who you are, I do*. Israel, and the individuals who were to return were not just a number, not just another nation, but they were specifically called out, so they would be identified as belonging to God. Shepherds whose sheep converged into one big flock would stand at opposite sides of the pasture and begin to call their sheep. The sheep, knowing the voice of the shepherd would then separate into the right herds.

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" – John 4:28-29

When God calls, we need to be attentive to His voice above all others so we can move toward Him

The Samaritan woman was understandably stand-offish to this Jewish man who approached her, but when she saw that *she was known*, she responded by acknowledging him as the Messiah.

We also are known of God. He calls us by name, and as he calls, we are able to hear his voice and follow him. The sheep following the shepherd simply trust the voice of the shepherd and move to that voice. Understanding that we are known of Him, we should likewise move toward him when he calls.

You Are Positioned

You are mine

Babylon effectively would own Israel through their time of captivity. When they came out, however God wanted Israel to see that they had a place in God's landscape. God was not so much speaking of possession or ownership but he was speaking more of the relationship he would have with Israel again.

All my father's descendants deserved nothing but death from my lord the king, but you gave your servant a place among those who eat at your table. So what right do I have to make any more appeals to the King? – II Samuel 19:28

Mephibosheth lived much of his life in fear of David because of what he had been told of his relationship. Mephibosheth unfortunately knew nothing of the standing covenant that David had with his father Jonathan. When David found Mephibosheth, he restored that relationship, and with it, the place in the family that he would have had.

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. – Ephesians 1:4-5

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. – Ephesians 2:4-6

Paul in speaking to the Ephesians told them that they had a place with the Father. They were positioned in proximity (seated in heavenly realms) and in relationship (adoption to sonship), which is what David did with Mephibosheth. This is also God's message to us.

You Are Not Alone

I will be with you

When I was young, I slipped into an area of a lake that was too deep for me. Had a stranger not come along, I would not have survived. He pulled me out, made sure I was ok, and then he was gone. To this day, I don't know if he was real or not. After that incident, I couldn't count on him to be with me, to come to my rescue or help me at all, even though he had saved my life.

God's message to Israel was that even though they were to come out of bondage, his commitment to them would not stop there.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." – Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus' commitment to the disciples and to us did not stop once he completed his work on earth. Jesus didn't qualify his commitment to his followers – he said he would be with the to the end. With this, regardless of the situation, we can always know he is in our corner.

Redemption's Core and End

I will say to the north, "Give them up!" and to the south, "Do not hold them back. Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth – everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." – Isaiah 43:6-7

Understanding God's redemption of his people also requires that we understand his purpose in creation. God could have started over, like he did with Noah or simply because he is all knowing, not even bothered with mankind. God however did have a purpose for us when he set about creating mankind:

...whom I created for my glory

While we know that we are to glorify God in our lives, this statement has a slightly different twist. He was not saying that he created us so that we would do something for him. Rather, we were created *as an object of or receiver of his glory*

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. – Psalm 8:3-5

God's plan for redemption is not simply to get us out of bondage, but it is to experience the fullness of the presence of God, and to realize that presence is always with us, because we are surrounded by it.