

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Important days in God's calendar: The day of redemption

Today is the second in our series of talks on "Important days in God's calendar". Last week we looked at the subject of "The day of salvation". Today's subject is "The day of redemption".

John Smith was in serious financial trouble. He had lost his job several months ago and, with a family to support, things were hard. He had no option but to go to the pawnbroker's shop and pawn his valuable watch. The few pounds he was given helped tide things over for a while. He did miss glancing at his wrist and not being able to see the time! Shortly after this, John managed to get another job and, after a few weeks saving up, he was able to go back to the pawnbroker and redeem his watch. What a relief it was to be able to see the time whenever he needed!

"Redemption" and the associated word "redeem" are important biblical words. The essential idea behind them is that of freedom secured by payment of a price, just as John was able to have his watch back and use it again by paying the appropriate price.

In the Old Testament, by far the greatest use of the word "redeem" is in connection with the deliverance of God's people, the Israelites, from their bondage in Egypt. God said to Moses, *"Therefore say to the children of Israel, 'I am the LORD; 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. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and I will give it you as a heritage: I am the LORD'"* (Exodus 6:6-8). You may recall that Pharaoh was understandably very reluctant to let his slave labour force go, and it was only after God had sent ten plagues upon the land of Egypt (Exodus 7:14-11:10) that Pharaoh eventually gave in and let the Israelites go. At last, they were free and God kept His promise and brought them into the Promised Land. But a price had been paid. In that final plague, God had instructed His people to take a Passover lamb (Exodus 12:1-5), kill it and put its blood on the doorposts and lintel of their houses (see Exodus 12:21-22). In this way, the firstborn son was preserved in every Israelite home, but the firstborn son in each Egyptian home was killed. This was the final straw that persuaded Pharaoh to let the Israelites go.

In later years, God would frequently remind His people of that great deliverance. Some 500 years later, in that precious promise in Isaiah 43:1, God speaks to His people, *"But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine.'"* Believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, enjoy that promise for yourself! (See also Isaiah 44:22-24; 48:20; 52:9; 63:9). Those frequent references to God's deliverance of them by His mighty outstretched arm would comfort His people when they were suffering oppression by other nations. He was still that same mighty God!

In the New Testament, redemption is used in a similar way. So Peter writes, *"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. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God"* (1 Peter 1:18-21).

As Peter makes clear in 1 Peter 1:18-21, the price of our redemption was paid by the Lord Jesus Christ when He died on the cross of Calvary. It is interesting that the Apostle Paul refers back to that redemption in Egypt when he writes concerning the death of Christ, *"Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us"* (1 Corinthians 5:7). As believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, let us never forget that tremendous price which He paid for us. We can never thank Him enough for what He did there! Graham Kendrick writes,

*The price is paid: come, let us enter in
to all that Jesus died to make our own.
For every sin more than enough He gave
and bought our freedom from each guilty stain.*

Graham Kendrick © 1983 Thankyou Music

We can express that thanksgiving not only with our lips but by living lives that are surrendered to Him. So Paul writes, *"For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Just as God would remind His people of old for their encouragement of that great redemption worked out for them in Egypt, so He would remind us, when we go through times of difficulty, that the cross of Calvary stands as the unchanging witness of His great love for us.

As we have seen, the price has been paid. We need now to consider the freedom that has been secured for us as a result of the Lord Jesus paying that price. In the New Testament, we find that there are at least three wonderful aspects to that freedom.

- we are set free from the penalty of our sin
- we have been set free from the power of sin
- there is a day coming when we shall be set free from the very presence of sin itself

We are set free from the penalty of our sin

The first is that we are set free from the penalty of our sin. The necessity for that deliverance is solemnly spelt out: *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). However, the next verse goes on to add, *"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* That penalty is also solemnly spelt out in Romans 6:23: *"For the wages of sin is death"*, but that same verse goes on to say, *"But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Praise His Name!

We have been set free from the power of sin

Secondly, through Christ's redeeming work, we have been set free from the power of sin. When we trusted Christ as our Saviour, not only did we receive God's free gift of eternal life but we were also given His Holy Spirit. Paul writes to the Ephesian believers, *"In [Christ] you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise"* (Ephesians 1:13). That Holy Spirit is the power to enable us to overcome sin's power in our lives. Romans 6:22 reminds us, *"But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life."* It is not for nothing that the Spirit is called the Holy Spirit. His work is to produce holiness in each believer. That "fruit unto holiness" is beautifully described in Galatians 5:22-23: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."*

There is a day coming when we shall be set free from the very presence of sin itself

You do not need me to remind you that we live in a sinful world. The media are constantly reminding us of the misdeeds of one and another. We cannot ignore its polluting influence and, at times, we are saddened by it. But, thirdly, the Bible teaches us that there is a day coming when we shall be set free from the very presence of sin itself. What a glorious day that will be!

The Apostle John, banished to the Isle of Patmos for his faith in Christ, was given a vision of that day: *"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away'"* (Revelation 21:2-4).

The redemption that we have in Christ Jesus is so much greater than the redemption God's people of old could ever know. Let us just remind ourselves again of the greatness of it. Because of the price the Lord Jesus paid on the cross of Calvary, those of us who have trusted in Him have been set free from the penalty of sin; we are being set free from its power today; finally, there is a day coming when we shall be set free from the very presence of sin itself! Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

As we said at the beginning, this talk is the second of a series. Last week, we looked at "The day of salvation". Our subject today is "The day of redemption". We should just remind ourselves that, in the Bible, the word "day" is used in a variety of ways. It may mean a literal period of 24 hours. It can also mean an unspecified period of time which may last for many years. Finally, it may mean a specific moment in a particular day.

The day of salvation

The expression, "The day of salvation", is found in 2 Corinthians 6:2: "*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*" That day began when the church was formed at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47) and the Gospel of the grace of God began to be preached. In the grace of God, it continues to the present day. It has lasted for nearly 2,000 years! But listener, if you have not yet trusted Christ as Saviour, be warned that one day it will come to an end. God only promises today and Scripture appeals, "*Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts*" (Hebrews 3:15).

The day of redemption

We turn, now, to our subject, "The day of redemption". The expression is found only in Ephesians 4:30: "*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*" There is a related expression in Ephesians 1:13-14: "*...the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*" Both these quotations refer to that special moment in time when the Lord Jesus will come from heaven to take His church, comprising all believers, whether living or dead, from the day of Pentecost until that moment, to be with Him for ever.

Just suppose John Smith had never gone back to that pawnbroker's shop to redeem his watch. After a suitable period of time, it would have been sold off and would have been lost to him for ever. Our Lord Jesus Christ cares too deeply for His church not to want to redeem it! The price He paid at Calvary was too great for Him not to want to have her with Him in heaven. Paul reminds Titus, "*Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people [or, a people for His own possession], zealous for good works*" (Titus 2:13-14). Those powerful words, "*who gave Himself for us*" (Titus 2:14), tell us just how much the church matters to Christ.

That special moment when the Lord Jesus comes for His church is set out in more detail in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17: "*For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*"

The hymn writer, Edward Denny, captures something of what that special moment means to the Lord Jesus Himself in the lines:

*He comes, for oh! His yearning heart
No more can bear delay,
To scenes of full unmingled joy
To call His bride away.*

As believers on the Lord Jesus, we might well look forward to that special time when He returns to take us to be with Himself. But we do need, too, to recognise just how much that special moment means to Him! He is coming so that that purchased possession, for whom He paid the price with His own blood at Calvary, might at last be His, free from this sinful world and eternally at home with Him.

The prophet, Isaiah, some 600 years before the Lord Jesus was born, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit looks forward to that time when he writes, "*He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied*" (Isaiah 53:11). Think of the wonder of that! There is a day coming when the Lord Jesus, with His church beside Him, will look at her, and then look back at Calvary with all its shame and suffering, and decide that it was all worthwhile! None of us would dare to presume such a thing but God gives it to us in His word for our worship and adoring wonder.

The coming of the Lord Jesus for His church is the trigger which will set in motion a whole series of events which are detailed for us in the book of the Revelation. When the church is removed from this sinful earth, there will follow a time of unparalleled suffering for this world which cast out and crucified God's Son. This is known as the Tribulation and will last for seven years, the sufferings of the latter half being more intense than the first half. After this, the Lord Jesus will return in glory with His church to set up His kingdom on earth. This will last for a thousand years and is known as the Millennium. Following a final battle with Satan and his supporters which will end in his destruction, God will bring in a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 20:11-21:4).

Even this physical creation longs for this time! In Romans 8:19-23, we read, "*For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope: because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of*

corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now. And not only they, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:19-23).

We said at the beginning that the essential meaning of the word "redemption" is that of freedom secured by payment of a price. In the wisdom and grace of God, that freedom so dearly paid for by the Lord Jesus at Calvary, extends not only to you and me, but even to this inanimate creation! My God, how great Thou art!

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