

The Nature of God—*His Work*

by: Steven J. Wallace

“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God’” (Is. 44:6, all verses are from the NKJV unless noted).

In the last article, we looked at the position of our God, that of King. We also noted in passing some of the parallels that exist between Isaiah 44:6-8 and Revelation 1:5-8 which is clearly speaking of Jesus Christ, the second person in the Godhead. Both passages speak of the subject matter in this article, that of being *redeemer*. Again, we emphasize that Jehovah has personally invested Himself with man. *Redemption* is what required the sending forth of God the Son, to die as a suitable payment for sin; yet, this was known to Him before the creation of man (Rev. 13:8; 2 Tim. 1:9). It amazes me that knowing this cost was involved, He still created man! What love Jehovah has shown for us, His creation! But first let us explore Jehovah as Redeemer in the Old Testament.

And His Redeemer

The fact that Jehovah refers to Himself as Israel’s redeemer shows that Israel was in need of being redeemed. It also implicates that Israel was unable to redeem themselves. What does “redeemed” mean? As it was understood by the Hebrews it carried with it the idea of “payment.” If an Israelite became too poor to own his land and sold it to another, his brother could redeem it by paying for the years from the sale until the Jubilee so that it could quickly go back to the family’s estate (Lev. 25:23-28). If it could not be redeemed, then it would be restored back to the original inheritor’s estate in the Year of Jubilee which came every 50 years. Redemption of the land was tied to a ransom and the year of Jubilee which was the year of liberty; thus, to redeem is to pay for freedom (Ezek. 46:17; Lev. 25:8-10).

Redemption is perhaps defined even clearer in Exodus 6:5-7. Take note of it carefully.

“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 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” (emp. added, sjw).

This above passage produces a template of what it means to be redeemed by God and will serve as the basis of our study. When God redeems, He brings us out from under something, He rescues us from something, He pays something. In the last point we may add, that He may pay retribution to those who are sinning and at the same time make a payment of grace for those who will obey.

Redemption: It’s Cost

Redemption is a beautiful concept, but that doesn’t mean that it is not without a cost. Something has been paid to rescue and bring one out. Perhaps the idea is better seen in verse seven in *Young’s Literal Translation* where God says, “and have taken you to Me for a people, and I have been to you for God...” It is in *taking* them that He is *giving* Himself to them. Redemption has in the heart of it “in the taking” a “giving” of something. This is perhaps a foreshadowing of the gift given in Christ to redeem us to God, “who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). Jesus “gave” to “take” for Himself. Even the love that we have for Him is based on His love that He first gave (1 Jn. 4:19).

But the Lord told old Israel that He would redeem them with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Both components are employed in their deliverance. He used severe judgments upon Egyptian gods to bring about Israel’s deliverance (cf. Ex. 12:12). He also used an “outstretched arm.” The Bible is a book of pictures, and it conveys the picture here of an arm extended out. Perhaps this is a picture of fierce strength, but also

perhaps of protection and defense for His people. “The eternal God is your refuge, And underneath are the everlasting arms; He will thrust out the enemy from before you, And will say, ‘Destroy!’” (Deut. 33:27). It reminds me of the lamenting scene of Jesus in the New Testament, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Matt. 23:37).

Redemption: It's Motivation

The motivation to redeem, is not merely just to save. Salvation and deliverance are certainly composed in the purpose, but redemption is motivated by *affection*. God genuinely *cares* for us (1 Pet. 5:7). “I will take you as My people...” (Ex. 6:7) pictures God’s desire for the company of man. Nothing has changed in the New Testament either as far as this is concerned:

“...Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (Heb. 11:16).

“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (Rev. 21:7).

There is something in man that God wants and takes pleasure in. What is it that God desires from a man? The fatherly words of Solomon seem very fitting, “My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways” (Prov. 23:26). Again, Moses stated, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:5; cf. Jer. 17:7; 29:13; Joel 2:12; Lk. 10:27). What love we can show, though it pales in comparison to His and though it wars against self-absorption and short-sightedness, is something God yearns for. He takes pleasure in our heart when our thoughts run to Him and take refuge and interest in His will. In His compassion, He is concerned with what we are going through. “I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel...” (Ex. 6:5). He is moved by our circumstances with sympathy. “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My

sympathy is stirred” (Hos. 11:8). Let no one question the motivation for redemption: God loves and paid the price so that we may love Him in return. “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 Jn. 4:19).

Redemption: It's Covenant

Redemption from God is not without a covenant but *by* a covenant. “He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever: Holy and awesome is His name” (Ps. 111:9). Again, “...I have remembered My covenant” (Ex. 6:5). God reveals His will in His covenant, and it is by our acceptance and obedience of that covenant that brings a perfected love from God. “But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him” (1 Jn. 2:5). As long as the Israelites were faithful to the word, God took pleasure in them. The problem came when men and women began to cast off the will of God. Because our God is the “I AM,” He will keep His covenant in things that pertain to blessing and retribution. When His people break it and persist in falsehoods, He is left no recourse but to deny, discipline and finally destroy them if there is no repentance. His nature is opposed to evil, and while He does not take any delight in the death of the wicked, He will bring about their destruction, if not in this life, for certain in the next. Idolatry is hideous to the Lord because only hearts that are divided or unfaithful commit such an act against God. No idol loved and sacrificed to redeem a man. It is insulting, to say the least. Let us not be deceived, when we replace God as the object of our greatest affection, we become idolatrous. As such we can only expect doom from the Lord as those men and women of Judah who persisted in offering up worship to the so-called “queen of heaven” (Jer. 44:19). Jeremiah 44:22-26 reads,

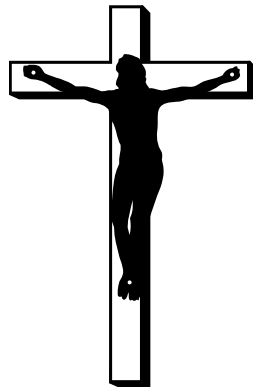
“²² So the LORD could no longer bear it, because of the evil of your doings and because of the abominations which you committed. Therefore your land is a desolation, an astonishment, a curse, and without an inhabitant, as it is this day. ²³ Because you have burned incense and because you have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD or walked in His law, in His statutes or in His

testimonies, therefore this calamity has happened to you, as at this day.²⁴ Moreover Jeremiah said to all the people and to all the women, 'Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah who are in the land of Egypt!²⁵ Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: "You and your wives have spoken with your mouths and fulfilled with your hands, saying, 'We will surely keep our vows that we have made, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her.' You will surely keep your vows and perform your vows!"²⁶ Therefore hear the word of the LORD, all Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt: "Behold, I have sworn by My great name," says the LORD, "that My name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, "The Lord GOD lives."'"

Redemption: It's Effect

Finally, consider what Moses recorded in our Exodus 6 text, "Then you shall **know** that I am the LORD your God who brings you out..." (6:7, emp. added). The effect that redemption should have on us is knowing the Lord. Faith should produce an intimate knowledge of the Redeemer. "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge" (2 Pet. 1:5). The work that God did for Israel while they were in Egypt should have been something that spurred on a desire to know Him. Likewise, "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" should have the same effect of knowing Christ and building faith in God (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). One reason Jesus came to earth is so that we can know the Father (Jn. 14:6-9). The

The idea is that you are going to get what you desire and deserve. Since they wanted to worship a false name and a false god, then the Lord would take His great name out of their mouth. Let your mouth be consistent with your actions! The Lord cannot be faithful and at the same time receive faithless men, "If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:12, 13). Hence the example of the Israelites who violated the covenant of Jehovah is eloquently stated by the Holy Spirit,



redeemed apostle Paul counted all the learning and worldly advancement that he attained as rubbish in comparison to learning Christ (Phil. 3:4-14). What an attitude for all the redeemed to have, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Phil. 3:10). What effect does the work of Christ have on you?

¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,¹⁵ while it is said: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.'¹⁶ For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?¹⁷ Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?¹⁸ And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?¹⁹ So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:14-19).