

The Lord redeems his people

by Scott Grant

Kind of like a fairy tale

Fairy tales are big on instant transformation. A lowly sister becomes a princess. A frog becomes a prince. All in the blink of an eye, the wave of a wand or the kiss of the lips. As believers in Jesus Christ, a transformation is taking place in our lives. Only the transformation isn't instant. It takes time. The Lord is turning us into warriors for the kingdom of God.

A similar transformation takes a major step forward in Exodus 11:1-13:16. When the book of Exodus started, the people of God were slaves in Egypt. When they leave Egypt in 12:41, they are the Lord's warriors.

The first 9 plagues came in three series of three. In each series, the Lord was intent on making some point of distinction. In plagues 1 through 3, he distinguished between his servant, Moses, and the servants of the Egyptian gods, the magicians. In plagues 4 through 6, he distinguished between his people, the Israelites, and the people of the world, the Egyptians. In plagues 7 through 9, he distinguished between himself and everyone else.

In the 10th plague, these three points of distinction reappear (11:3, 6, 7). The 10th plague also further emphasizes the third and most important aspect: There is no one like the Lord. This aspect is most clearly seen in redemption. In the 10th an final plague, the Lord redeems his people, demonstrating that there is no one like him. No one can do what he does. No one loves like he loves.

The Passover and the Exodus provide the biblical paradigm for redemption. The grand culmination of this paradigm is seen in Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice as the Passover lamb created our own exodus - an exodus from slavery to freedom, from death to life. We therefore find a tremendous number of parallels between the Exodus story and the New Testament story (see chart on the next page).

In the Exodus story, we see four elements of redemption: sacrifice (12:1-13), faith (12:21-23, 28), gifts (12:29-36) and warriors (12:37-41). These elements not only accompanied the Israelites' story of redemption, but they are attendant to our own stories of redemption as well.

Prelude to redemption (11:1-10)

This section constitutes a prologue to the 10th plague, serving as a prelude to the act of redemption.

Pharaoh will drive the Israelites out of Egypt. The grammatical construction here conveys an intensity in Pharaoh's action. As intensely as he desired to control the Israelites earlier, he now just as intensely wants to drive them out. In Genesis 3:24, man was driven by God from the garden. Adam and Eve had chosen to reject God, so they were given their wish - separation from God's presence. But God didn't give up on his creation. He immediately set about to redeem humanity - to bring humanity back to him. As part of this redemption, the people of Israel are being driven back toward God. They will meet with him in intimate fellowship on Mount Sinai, and they will eventually settle in the land of Canaan, which is spoken of in similar terms to the garden of Eden (Deuteronomy 11:8-15).

Were it not for the Lord, who used circumstances to drive us to him, we never would have found him in the first place. And were it not for circumstances that he continues to use, we would wander from him. But he continually uses circumstances to drive us back to him. He raises up people like Pharaoh who drive us back to

him.

Parallels between Passover/Exodus and New Testament: Exodus 11:1-13:16

Exodus	Characteristic	New Testament
11:5	death of first-born	John 3:16, Col 1:15
12:2	new beginning	2 Cor 5:17
12:3	lamb	John 1:29, 1 Cor 5:7
12:5	without blemish	1 Pet 1:19
12:6	all responsible	Ro 3:23
12:13	freedom from death	Ro 8:2
12:7	blood applied	Ro 5:9; Eph 1:7, 2:8
12:6	vicarious sacrifice	Matt 26:28, Heb 9:28
12:9-10	body of sacrifice	Heb 10:4-10
12:11	readiness	Mark 1:2-4
12:12	gods judged	John 16:11, Col 2:15
12:14	celebration of feast	Lu 22:15-20; 1 Cor 5:8, 11:23-35
12:14	permanent ordinance	1 Cor 11:6
12:14-20	no leaven	1 Cor 5:6-8
12:21	one way	John 14:6, Acts 4:12
12:22	hyssop	John 19:29
12:22	death can't enter	Ro 8:2
12:27, 42-51	who may celebrate	1 Cor 5, 11:23-35
12:35	gifts after victory	Eph 4:8-11
12:37	warriors	Eph 6:12, 1 Ti 6:12
12:39	flee without provisions	1 Cor 6:18
12:46	no bone broken	John 19:33, 36
13:1-2, 11-16	devotion to God	Ro 12:1
12:3	power to save	2 Pet 1:3, Eph 1:19-24
13:14	freedom from slavery	Ro 6:6, 8:2

The Israelites and Moses found favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moses, in particular, was greatly esteemed. Sometimes we, too, as believers in Christ will find favor

in the eyes of the world, which often admires a life of integrity and self-sacrifice. The danger comes when we find ourselves living to gain the world's favor or derive our worth from its response.

Moses, the Israelite who was most esteemed by the Egyptians, considers it of no consequence to his own value. This is obvious by virtue of his ensuing speech, in which he promises death for the first-born of the Egyptians, the ones who esteem him so. If he were trying to curry their favor, he wouldn't be making such inflammatory promises.

The Lord's reason for and answer to the resistance the Israelites have experienced from Pharaoh is a mathematical function: multiplication. Pharaoh has been resistant to letting the people go so that the Lord could multiply his wonders - to overcome fierce resistance and thereby make himself known, which is what everyone, both Israelites and Egyptians, need.

It is the Lord's reason for and answer to resistance in our lives as well. He wants to reveal himself - to show himself able to overcome incredible odds so that he'll be known and that we can know him.

The prologue is future-oriented. The verbs appear in a Hebrew tense that places the events in the future. There is a forward-looking feel to it all. The emphasis is on what the Lord will do. Thus, as a prelude to a great musical piece, it builds anticipation. The life of faith is one of anticipation. We live in excited anticipation of the next great thing the Lord is going to do. And if we believe his promises of redemption, we know it's going to be great.

The promises of the Lord, then, serve as a great prelude to their fulfillment. A prelude to a musical work builds anticipation for what is to come. One of my favorite works of music is John Michael Talbot's "The Lord's Supper," which is introduced by a slow-moving prelude that features a bass solo that leaves listeners aching for the full orchestral and vocal blast that is to follow. The first movement in the symphony of redemption is sacrifice.

Sacrifice of redemption (12:1-13)

The first thing we need to know about redemption is that involves a sacrifice. Implicit within the concept of redemption is freedom from some form of oppression for the payment of a price. The price of human redemption is death. The penalty for mankind's rejection of the Lord is death. Two kinds of death are represented in the 10th plague: the death of Passover lamb and the death of the first-born of Egypt. These sacrifices were both fulfilled in Christ, who on the cross became the Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7) and was sacrificed as the first-born (John 3:16, Colossians 1:15).

The month of the Exodus becomes the first month of the year for the Israelites. When we found Christ, we were redeemed by God. This represented a beginning - a new beginning. As he continually redeems us from sin and brings us closer to himself, we begin again - and again, and again. We may feel that we have trashed our lives, or that our best days are behind us, but it's never too late for a new beginning.

The Passover lamb must be unblemished. Christ was unblemished by sin (1 Peter 1:19). Also, not one bone of either the Passover lamb or Christ was broken (12:46, John 19:33, 36).

The "whole" assembly of Israel was involved in killing the lamb. All of us are responsible for the death of Christ. We are all implicated. Our sin put him on the cross.

Unleavened bread accompanies the Passover meal. The people won't be able to wait for bread to rise because they will have to leave Egypt quickly. This speaks of the liberation of the Lord - and the suddenness with which it comes. It is the Lord who liberates us.

Bitter herbs also accompany the meal. This speaks of the bitterness of slavery (1:14). When they eat the bitter herbs, they are reminded of how bitter their bondage in Egypt has been. We, too, need to be reminded of the bitterness of life apart from the Lord.

The unleavened bread, then, represents the liberation of the Lord, and the bitter herbs represent what we are liberated from.

All of the Passover lamb must be roasted by fire and eaten. This is a forerunner of the whole burnt offering (Leviticus 1:3-13), which represents complete surrender to God that is a pleasing aroma to God. Christ, the Passover lamb, completely surrendered himself to God, and his offering was a pleasing aroma to the Lord (Ephesians 5:2) - so pleasing that he forgave us our sins!

The meal is to be eaten with loins girded, sandals on feet and staff in hand. In other words, they were to be ready to leave Egypt quickly. They were to be prepared for the coming of the Lord. The New Testament correspondence for this is repentance - changing our mind about a lifestyle of rejecting God. John the Baptist called people to repentance so that they would be ready for Jesus Christ (Mark 1:2-4).

In the 10th plague, and presumably in all the plagues, the Lord executes judgments against the gods of Egypt. Behind their gods, or any gods for that matter, are demons to whom the Egyptians are appealing (1 Corinthians 10:20). The New Testament correspondence is the great judgment God executed against Satan and his demons at the cross, where he rendered Satan powerless (John 12:31, 16:11; Colossians 2:15). Satan can no longer bring a charge against God's people, for Christ accepted the guilty charge and paid the price.

At this point, the Lord says, "I am the Lord." This phrase, which appears throughout Exodus, appears only here in the story of the 10th plague. It is a phrase of distinction - which separates the Lord from everyone else. It is appropriate that it appears here in the context of judgment against false gods. The Lord is the true God.

On the basis of shed blood, the Lord "passes over" the Israelites, and they are spared the 10th plague.

The first aspect we see in redemption is that it necessitates a death - a sacrifice. The Passover lamb is a foreshadowing of Christ, who sacrificed himself as the Passover lamb. Our redemption was won for us by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who was slain in our place.

Malcolm Muggeridge, the British journalist, in his autobiography "Chronicles of Wasted Time" describes a time when he donated his blood to his seriously ill wife: "As my blood, systematically, to the pump's rhythm, pumped into Kitty's veins, bringing life visible to her face, my blood pouring into her to keep her alive, my life reinforcing hers, for the first time I truly understood what love meant." In this we see something of the sacrifice of Christ that brought us redemption - his blood poured out for us, giving us life.

A sacrifice, though necessary for redemption, does not benefit anyone unless he or she accepts that sacrifice. This acceptance involves faith.

Faith of redemption (12:21-23, 28)

Blood is to be applied with hyssop. Not coincidentally, but providentially, hyssop was also used at the scene of another sacrifice: It was used to give Jesus wine when he was dying on the cross (John 19:29).

The blood of the lamb has to be applied to the top and sides of the door. The New Testament correspondence to this is the application of the blood of Christ through faith. Through faith in Christ and his substitutionary death, his blood is applied to our sins, and we are clean in God's sight.

The blood covers both the top and the sides of the door. The only way into the house, the door, is completely covered by the blood of the lamb. There is no way, therefore, that death can enter such a house. There is no way that spiritual death - separation from God - can enter us, either, because we are completely covered by the blood of Christ.

The Israelites are instructed not to go outside the door of the house. The world offers up a plethora of ways to salvation, however it defines salvation. Peter says of Jesus Christ, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The amazing thing is that all the Israelites have to do to be saved is sit down and trust that God will work. Likewise, all we have to do is sit down and trust God. Because the world offers other solutions, we may be inclined to go outside the house, so to speak, outside Christ, to work for it. In God's redemption, he works

and we rest.

Were it not for the blood of the Passover lamb, the Israelites would have suffered the same fate as the Egyptians. Similarly, were it not for the blood of Christ, we would suffer the wrath of God just as those who don't believe in Christ. We are no less deserving of God's wrath than anyone else.

God not only saves them from slavery in Egypt, he saves them from death in Egypt. The correspondence for us the salvation God has given us from sin and death (Romans 8:2). Because of the blood of Christ, our sin cannot cause death - we cannot be separated from God.

The Lord promises that "the destroyer" (described in Psalm 78:49 as an angel) will not strike the houses of Israel. Deep down, all of us likely harbor some kind of fear of God. At some place within us, we're afraid he's out to destroy us, perhaps because we don't think we measure up to his standards. But Moses says that the Lord will not allow the destroyer to come into the houses of the Israelites, because of the blood of the lamb. Because of the blood of the Lamb, we are assured that God is not out to get us; moreover, he will not allow us to be destroyed.

Redemption comes first of all by way of sacrifice and second of all by faith in that sacrifice. Paul in Ephesians 2:8 sums up this dynamic neatly: "For by grace you have been saved through faith ... " God in his grace sacrificed his Son; we in faith accept that sacrifice. By faith, believing that the blood of Christ is all that qualifies us to know God, we are saved.

The Israelites did just as the Lord commanded. What did the Lord command? He commanded that they apply the blood to the doorway. He commanded faith. Of all the commands of the Lord, this is the most important. We are to be obedient to God's command that we believe that the sacrifice of his Son is all that qualifies us to know him. When Peter speaks of obedience, he is speaking of faith (1 Peter 1:2, 1:14, 1:22, 2:8, 3:20, 4:17). The more thoroughly we believe this, the more thoroughly we will find ourselves obedient to God's other commands as well. What we believe dictates what we will do.

I don't like maps. I'm not sure why. This is a particular handicap inasmuch as I have little sense of direction. Often I'll be struggling to find some place. Even though I'm struggling, the struggle sometimes has to get pretty intense before I check a map. Someone has gone to a great deal of trouble to make a map so that directionless fools like me can find their way around. But unless I avail myself of it, it profits me nothing. Similarly, God in his grace has made the blood of Christ available to all - to all us directionless fools. But it is profitable only to those who recognize their need and appropriate the blood through faith.

God accompanies redemption, an indescribable gift in and of itself, with other gifts as well.

Gifts of redemption (12:29-36)

After the plague of the first-born, both Pharaoh and his people urge the Israelites to leave. In an ironic twist, Pharaoh arises in the middle of the night to awake Moses and Aaron and order them to leave with the people. Earlier, it was Moses who rose early in the morning to meet Pharaoh and demand that he let the people go (7:15, 8:20, 9:30).

For a while, it seems that we have to "rise early," so to speak, to get the people of the world to respond, to get the world to listen to us. It seems that there's no way to break through. But if and when the Lord wants them to respond, they'll respond. And when they do, they'll be coming to us, for the Lord dwells with those who are covered by the blood of his Son.

Pharaoh himself recognizes something of this, for he asks Moses to bless him. Pharaoh recognizes at the least that Moses has access to some supernatural power. When people see and understand the power of God at work in our lives, they'll come to us to find out how they can be similarly blessed.

The people left with silver, gold and clothing that were given to them by the Egyptians. But it is the Lord's actions that prompt the Egyptians to give up their treasures. It is the Lord who gives his people these gifts. The

silver and gold were used in the building of the tabernacle, the place of God's dwelling (25:3). The Lord, then, gave gifts of silver and gold so that his dwelling place could be built.

The New Testament correspondence is the spiritual gifts he gives to believers in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:8) by which we build up the body of Christ, the place of God's dwelling (Ephesians 4:12, 16). Jesus, like a conquering warrior, defeated Satan at the cross, and celebrated the victory by giving gifts to his people. This says a lot of what God thinks of us. No one freely gives gifts to people they don't like. God gives us gifts because he likes us, because we're his precious children.

Not long ago I attended a pastors conference at which a very gifted teacher spoke: Earl Palmer. At the conclusion of his third and final presentation, the man sitting next to me was inspired. He had this feeling that he wanted to do something significant, but he wasn't sure what it was. He knew it had something to do with sharing God and more specifically something to do with teaching the scriptures. Then suddenly it dawned on him. He looked at me and said, "I want to be Earl!" I was similarly impacted. But the Lord has been working on me lately to show me that I'm gifted, too. Each of us is gifted (Ephesians 4:7). I'm resistant to this truth because I don't think I'm worthy of being gifted by God. I think I have to be a better person to receive gifts. But the Lord has broken through that resistance a little lately to show me that, yes, he has gifted me - even me. Because he created me in his image and redeemed me in Christ Jesus, I am valuable, precious and worthy. The gifts he has given me are evidence of his love for me. And that liberates me. I don't have to work to be worthy enough to be as gifted as Earl. In Christ I am worthy, and I am gifted. I don't have to be Earl; I just have to be Scott.

Finally, as gifted children, the people become mighty warriors.

Warriors of redemption (12:37-41)

The Israelites leave Egypt with 600,000 men and probably about 2 million people total. The men are singled out because the emphasis here is on the army that the Lord has formed, and it is men who constitute the army. Because it is men who constitute armies, an earlier king of Egypt tried to extinguish the male population of Israel (1:16, 22). Obviously, he failed - by about 600,000 men.

When the people leave, they don't delay, even though it is the middle of the night and they are unprepared. They are in bondage in Egypt. When the Lord acts to give you the opportunity to leave Egypt, you leave. You don't dilly-dally around. Because they dashed out, they had not prepared any provisions. This is a scary thing - to leave Egypt without provisions. It is bold step of faith. They have to trust that God will provide. And he did, with water, quail and manna (15:25-16:36).

Similarly, it is a bold step when we leave Egypt behind - when we give up a lifestyle of sin, whether it be coming to the Lord for the first time or abandoning some sinful way after we've already come to him. Whatever our sinful strategy, it has provided us with the image of significance, safety, acceptance or fulfillment. When the Lord breaks through, there's no time to dilly-dally. It's time to bolt out the door. Paul's command in 1 Corinthians 6:18 is apt: "Flee immorality." But when we flee any sinful strategy, we feel naked. It feels like dying. It feels as if we have no hope for significance, safety, acceptance, fulfillment. It feels as if we have no provisions. But we are to flee sin, dash out the door naked if necessary, and trust the Lord to provide. He will.

When the people leave Egypt, they are called the Lord's "hosts," or divisions. These are warriors. The Lord, through years of affliction, plagues, promises and power by which he has revealed himself, has fashioned a ragtag group of slaves into an army of warriors. It didn't happen overnight. In fact, it took 430 years. And even now, they're fresh-faced soldiers who haven't been battle-tested.

The Lord is doing the same for us. It doesn't happen overnight for us either. But the Lord is fashioning us into warriors by showing us himself. He's turning us into fearless fighters in the kingdom of God, people who serve him joyously, who share the gospel confidently, who selflessly use their gifts and enter into the lives of others to speak truth and to encourage and to build up.

Anyone who has been to boot camp will tell you that it's no day at the beach and that it seems as if it lasts forever. It may be that way for us as well. But the Lord is molding us into men and women who serve fearlessly.

Fight the good fight

In redemption, the Lord turns slaves of sin into warriors for the kingdom. As we accurately see how God has revealed himself in the elements that constitute and accompany redemption (the sacrifice of Christ, faith in Christ, spiritual gifts), we see him. And seeing him, we fight the good fight.

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