

Gospel of Redemption.

Part 3 of 4

St Matt's - June 2021

The Gospel of God

A Good Story in 4 Acts:

Act 3: Redemption

This is the third in a four-part sermon series where I want to trace out the Gospel of God from Genesis to Revelation.

The four headings I am using are:

- Creation
- Fall
- Redemption
- Transformation



Recap

Two weeks ago we got to the sad low point of The Fall when it covered all the earth and humanity was alienated from God, the earth and each other. With the Tower of Babel sin was embedded in global civilization and infecting all cultures.

The Gospel is thus far an 'Up and Down' story. The creation process was all upwards in 6 days from the primordial chaos and nothingness peaking with Humanity as made in the image of God living in the garden provided. The Fall that followed was a regression and decline backwards into disorder and chaos through six events that can be read as 'Uncreation'.

Introduction to Redemption

Q. What happens next in this Gospel Story?

A. From Genesis 12:1 we read:

12 Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'

God now starts to work in history to redeem his creation. In what follows God makes 3 promises to Abraham: He is promised Descendants, Relationship -with God- & a Land.

Following on from Abraham, Isaac & Jacob - after 400 years this family had become a people, a nation known as 'The Hebrews'. So far so good, but there was a problem! This people had become enslaved in Egypt as slave labourers to build a city.

The story that follows of the Hebrews being liberated from slavery, bound to God in a covenant and established in the Land of Canaan is the defining story of the People of Israel. This is where they first became who they were to be and learned to know God as God wanted to be known and how to worship Him. This is the Exodus story.

Even though it does not happen first, Exodus is the founding salvation story. It is the God of Creation continuing his work by creating a people for himself by liberating them from slavery in Egypt, the 'house of bondage'.

Through the ages Israel would learn that God's salvation comes in many forms: For example, healing, deliverance, provision, protection etc. What this first example illustrated and taught was that in the fallen world, God rescued slaves. Slavery and all that comes with it is a direct feature of The Fall. As his opening grand action in addressing the Fall God chose to rescue a chosen people from slavery.

Israel never forgot this:

In Deuteronomy 26:5b-11, every Israelite presenting an offering was to remember:

'A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. ⁶ And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labour. ⁷ Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸ And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders. ⁹ And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

In short we are a people because The Lord our God rescued us from slavery in Egypt.

With all that in mind let's fast-forward to the New Testament and the climax of God's saving work through his people and his Son, Jesus Christ.

Slavery was an economic foundation in the first century Roman Empire with one third of the population being enslaved. Within that social-economic reality God's saving work to save creation through Jesus Christ climaxes in His Cross and Resurrection. Several metaphors are applied to describe what or how God acted to save his creation from the power and legacy of The Fall. They include 'reconciliation' and 'sacrifice of atonement' as metaphors that come to mind. But in the Graeco-Roman world an economic term from slavery stood out strongly to describe what God was doing at that moment in the great Gospel story.

That metaphor is 'Redemption' which connected with the deep appreciation of God as one who rescues slaves from oppressive masters. In using the term 'Redemption' God's salvation is featured as the rescuing of his people from hostile captivity from which they cannot escape.

To make it crystal clear: Redemption was and still is, the commercial practice of buying the freedom of slaves.



Imagine being able to buy a slave from their owner the way we might buy a car or a bike? That was a simple commercial provision. Once you had bought a slave you could do with them whatever you wanted.

As a gospel metaphor 'Redemption' is about paying the price to buy back humanity from its slavery to sin in a world oppressed by evil.

To really get this we 21st Century people need to appreciate a few things:

1. Slavery is about ownership. It's owning or holding a person for the purpose of exploitation.
2. If someone buys or redeems a slave they then become their property. *Key point!*

- a. It was then possible for a new owner to grant freedom so the slave might be a free man/woman with papers to prove it. But, this is not assumed in the Bible's use of the term 'Redemption'.

The Fall resulted in all people's being made captive and slaves to sin in many ways.

Slaves to:

- The practice of sin in action
- The consequences of sin
- Addictions and loss of freedom
- Fear, Shame and Guilt.

The 3rd part of the Gospel Story is a story of God's Redeeming humanity from all this through God acting to buy, pay debts, rescue or liberate people in bondage to sin and its consequences.

Q Why?

A So that people may be free to serve God as his people – his redeemed children.

That is the 'Redemption story' - being rescued and liberated from Sin and its consequences to serve God in freedom. It's about being taken from serving under compulsion in misery to serving and enjoying the good God in freedom and joy – as we were made to do.

It is not release from serving sin to freedom to do what you want.

As Bob Dylan once put it: "You gotta serve someone!"

Application

Q When does this become Good News?

A The Gospel of Redemption through the saving work of God in Jesus Christ takes hold for people who realize they are in chains as slaves to sin in some form be it behaviour or consequences.

The Good News is that just as God rescued the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from bondage and slavery in Egypt to be his people and live in the land he provided, this same God has already effected a rescue of all humanity from the slavery and bondage of Sin.

A price was paid to redeem the captives from the power of The Fall and all its consequences.

The price or ransom fee for redeeming humanity from all that Sin inflicts was God's own life set forth in Jesus Christ.

St John reports Jesus saying:

¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

So for the redemption of humanity bound in the power and consequences of sin, God the creator and sustainer of the universe, devised a way to step into the depths and fullness of the sin soaked broken mess of a world of people and surrendered himself to Sin's power to the point where in the worst death imaginable, he absorbed its power.

As St Paul says in 2nd Corinthians 5:21

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin

This is what we see on the cross: God giving himself as a redeeming ransom to the power of sin that has humanity bound in slavery.

To think of this in slave market terms, This is where the ransom price of redemption was paid. God's life in Christ was broken on the cross and taken as yet another victim to sin. Yet Jesus was laid down as the redeeming price on the table.

But evil Sin is no gentleman and not an honest dealer. It's a power that seeks only to kill and destroy.

Just as Pharaoh's response was sometimes "Yeah-Nah!" after the plagues so even with the life of God in Jesus Christ lying in a tomb to mark his departure the humanity-hating manager of evil could also refuse to let the captives go. He could seek to hold the slaves indefinitely and keep the ransom of a perfect sacrifice left to rot.

God acted in good faith with the powers of Sin but had a yet more powerful move to make.

So when three days later God raised the broken sin abused form of Jesus back to life, he established a new humanity beyond the power of sin and death. Jesus was a new form of humanity living beyond Sin's powers.

The redemption price had been paid AND for good measure the one who had absorbed the cost of that redemption price to death was reclaimed by God's greater power in the resurrection.

That is God's redemption in the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, a price is paid in the life of Jesus of Nazareth – Son of God, Sin's claim upon us is compensated AND the faithful Son of God is raised to a new life. He is still Jesus but it's a new life, a new humanity, one no longer subject to sin.

In today's medical terms it's as if he was exposed to a lethal dose of sin but despite dying it actually inoculated him against sin and he evolved into a new species of human. That DNA he shares with all who would receive it.

The one who gave himself up as the redeeming price of freedom for all humanity, paid on our behalf was then raised to a life he can share with his friends.

To those who receive this redemption from slavery to sin and accept his new life he calls to join him in freely serving God as he does. We the redeemed are invited to be co-servants with Jesus in God's Kingdom.

As Paul wrote to the Colossians chapter 1:13-14a

¹³ He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption,

Application:

So on the basis that, you gotta serve someone.

- A. If you presently experience slavery to sin with the power of evil dictating, then there is very Good News! The redeeming price has been paid, a new and loving master awaits you.
 - a. Come to Jesus as your redeemer
- B. Are you enjoying Freedom and Joy? Then there is Good News too, Jesus calls you to share in the ongoing redemption of humanity by living the post-sin life he gives.

a. This is our worship as Redeemed and adopted slaves.

THE FOUR CHAPTER GOSPEL

CREATION Chapter	FALL Chapter	REDEMPTION Chapter	TRANSFORMATION Chapter
1	2	3	4
 	 	 	 
The way things were	The way things are	The way things could be	The way things will be