

## **The Exodus - A Redeemed People**

*John D. Rose*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the days of Abraham's grandson, Jacob – whose name was changed to Israel; the fledgling people now called Israel, the house of Jacob, moved into Egypt. Jacob's favored son Joseph had, many years earlier, been sold into slavery by his brothers and came to Egypt a slave. Through God's providence, Joseph attained to the governorship over Egypt and through his leadership the way was paved for Israel's sojourn in Egypt. After Joseph's death the children of Israel were bound in forced servitude under cruel taskmasters. In their agony, Israel cried out unto the God of Heaven and He remembered the covenant he had made with Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. To deliver His people from bondage, God sent Moses back to Egypt, from which he had fled in fear forty years earlier. In delivering His people, God brought ten plagues upon the rebellious land of Egypt. The last plague was the death of the firstborn. To stay the destroyer in the land of Goshen, the home of Israel in Egypt; the Passover lamb was sacrificed. The Passover laid the foundation for the further commandment of God to sanctify the firstborn, redeem the unclean, and sacrifice the clean.

### **REDEMPTION**

Redemption is a matter of value. Thayer's Greek Lexicon notes the following concerning ἀπολύτρωσις – redemption: “a releasing effected by payment of ransom; redemption, deliverance, liberation procured by the payment of a ransom.” That the payment was made by the Christ is everywhere evident in the New Testament and to this point, Mr. Thayer also writes: “everywhere in the New Testament metaphorical, viz. deliverance effected through the death of Christ from the retributive wrath of a holy God and the merited penalty of sin.”

Again, redemption is a matter of value. Webster's International Dictionary of 1907 gives this under the heading of *value* :

In political economy, value is often distinguished as intrinsic and exchangeable. Intrinsic value is the same as utility or adaptation to satisfy the desires or wants of men. Exchangeable value is that in an article or product which disposes individuals to give for it some quantity of labor, or some other article or product obtainable by labor: as pure air has an intrinsic value, but generally not an exchangeable value.

In the matter of Biblical redemption there is intrinsic and exchangeable value. Intrinsic value denotes something for which there is no price that can be paid to receive it. Exchangeable value denotes that for which a price can be paid. To redeem something is to pay the requisite price to deliver it from being bound. Biblical redemption describes the paying of a price to release a thing from sacrifice or a person from the bondage of sin.

#### *The Passover – Background to Redemption*

God brought ten plagues upon the Egyptians preceding the release of the Israelites by Pharaoh. Ten times God offered to Pharaoh the opportunity to obey His commands, nine times he refused; the tenth time Pharaoh obeyed – but only after tragedy. The Egyptians paid an enormous price for their sin in disobeying God. It was written of the tenth plague – the death of the firstborn:

And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that *was* in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for *there was* not a house

where *there was* not one dead. (Exo. 12:29-30)

God set apart or sanctified the firstborn of men and cattle for death (Exo. 11:5). The firstborn were singled out as the object of God's work in bringing Israel forth from Egyptian bondage. The firstborn was the price paid to release God's people. There was a redemptive path made available to all who would faithfully obey God – the sacrifice of the clean, the Passover lambs. Within the plague itself, one can see the shadow of good things to come (Heb. 10:1) – the sanctification of the firstborn, the redemption of the obedient, and the death of the redemptive sacrifice.

God memorialized the last plague by establishing the beginning of the Jewish calendar according to the time of the Passover (Exo. 12:2); declaring a perpetual feast with its ordinances to be observed by all Israel (Exo. 12:14); and by setting apart the firstborn in all Israel of man and beast unto the Lord (Exo. 13:2). God's people were to remember that a price was paid to bring them out of Egypt – the death of the firstborn (by extension) and directly by the Passover lambs (Exo. 13:9, 15).

## SANCTIFICATION OF THE FIRSTBORN

### *Of Men and Beasts*

Related to the Passover and the death of the firstborn was God's command to set apart the firstborn males of men and beasts in Israel, "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and of beast: it *is* mine" (Exo. 13:2; cf. Num. 3:13). God said, "it is mine." God declared that all the firstborn were especially devoted unto Him and none were to consider their firstborn to be theirs to do with them as they pleased (Exo. 13:12-13).

### *Sacrifice of the Clean*

In the matter of sanctification and sacrifice of the firstborn God made a distinction between the clean beast and the unclean beast (Lev. 11:47). Examples of those typical beasts of the Israelites that were clean are: cattle (bullocks), sheep, and goats (Lev. 11:3). Typical animals in Israel that were unclean are: camels, horses, and donkeys (Lev. 11:4). Of the firstborn males of clean animals, God gave specific instructions:

Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, *whether it be* of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem. And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which *is* twenty gerahs. **But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they *are* holy: thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and shalt burn their fat *for* an offering made by fire, for a sweet savour unto the LORD.** (Num, 18:15-17; emp. JDR)

Every firstborn clean male beast of the Israelites was to be set apart unto God and sacrificed as a sweet savor unto God. However, should that animal have a blemish it would not be sacrificed for it was unworthy, "And if there be *any* blemish therein, *as if it be* lame, or blind, *or have* any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the LORD thy God" (Deu. 15:21). Every worthy animal was God's and was to be sacrificed, "Only the firstling of the beasts, which should be the LORD'S firstling, no man shall sanctify [redeemed that it be not sacrificed, JDR] it; whether *it be* ox, or sheep: it *is* the LORD'S" (Lev. 27:26).

### *Redeeming of the Unclean and the Sons of Men*

The unclean beast was not to be sacrificed, "And if *it be* any unclean beast, of which they do not offer a sacrifice unto the LORD..." (Lev. 27:11). To sacrifice an unclean animal before God would be to

bring an abomination before God, “Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God” (Deu. 23:18); and to come before Him defiled. To come unto God’s tabernacle defiled was an abomination and made the trespasser worthy of death:

Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness; that they die not in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that *is* among them.” (Lev. 15:31)

Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness *is* yet upon him. (Num. 19:13)

But the soul that eateth *of* the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, that *pertain* unto the LORD, having his uncleanness upon him, even that soul shall be cut off from his people. (Lev. 7:20)

It was indeed a dreadful thing to bring before the Lord that which was unclean. To bring the defiled before God was to impugn His holiness and He called upon Israel to be holy, “And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine” (Lev. 20:26). The unclean firstborn animal was to be redeemed with a clean animal, “But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem *him* not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty” (Exo. 34:20). For the unclean, a substitution had to be made according to the value placed upon it by the Lord.

The redemption price for the firstborn sons of men was five shekels. God had taken the tribe of Levi in place of all the firstborn sons of the children of Israel and to finish the redemption payment, five shekels was paid for every firstborn son above the number of Levites:

Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, *whether it be* of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem. And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which *is* twenty gerahs. (Num. 18:15-16)

Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: I *am* the LORD. And for those that are to be redeemed of the two hundred and threescore and thirteen of the firstborn of the children of Israel, which are more than the Levites; Thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll, after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take *them*: (the shekel *is* twenty gerahs:) (Num. 3:45-47)

### **APPLICATION IN THE CHRIST**

The sanctification and redemption of the firstborn indeed were a type of the Christ. In the scheme of redemption one can see: sanctification of the firstborn, redemption of the unclean, and the sacrifice of the clean.

#### *Sanctification of the Firstborn*

That the Christ is the firstborn of God is abundantly clear from the New Testament. He was God on earth; God among man; the Son of God and the Son of man (John 1:14). In this sense, Jesus is fully

and ideally the firstborn of God – the only begotten of God (John 3:16). So importantly for mankind, Jesus is the firstborn from the dead never to die again:

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence. (Col. 1:18)

But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept . . . But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. (1 Cor. 15:20, 23)

As the firstborn from the dead, Jesus has forged the way into Heaven for His children; He has made clear the path one must travel to rise to walk in newness of life and to have an eternal home with God:

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Rom. 8:29)

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. (Heb. 12:23)

Jesus was sanctified or set apart by God, for He declared at the Mount of Transfiguration, "...This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Mat. 17:5). And the Father declared that He had glorified His name through His Son and would do so again, "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again" (John 12:28). John wrote of the Lord's uniqueness manifested by God unto the world by writing, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Yes, truly God did sanctify His only Begotten before man, thus John exclaimed, "...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

#### *Redemption of the Unclean*

Furthermore, it is plainly stated by the New Testament that the unclean were and are redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Men are soiled and stained by sin (Jude 23; Rom. 6:19). The unrighteous have made filthy their raiment and only the blood of the Lamb can cleanse their sins (Rev. 7:14, cf. Rev. 1:5). Every sinner has earned eternal condemnation (Rom. 6:23). So, for the sin stained there is, "But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:27). But all men ought to recognize that the saved, "... are bought with a price..." (1 Cor. 6:20); and that the price paid – the redemption price was the blood of the Lord:

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (1 Peter 1:18-19)

#### *Sacrifice of the Clean*

Jesus was set apart from sinners, "For such an high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26). He was tempted but never sinned, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Jesus was wholly without the stain of sin, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb.

9:14).

Jesus, clean and separate from sinners gave Himself a sacrifice well-pleasing to God for the sake of mankind, “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour” (Eph. 5:2). Moreover, the Lord gave Himself to put away the sins of men, “For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. 9:26); that they might live eternally with God, for, “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:54).

### **CONCLUSION**

The Hebrews writer said that the Old Law manifested a shadow of good things to come (Heb. 10:1). The great and greatly longed for and eagerly awaited plan of salvation was prefigured in the ordinances of the firstborn. For almost fifteen hundred years God was making and molding Israel and the world through their influence to receive the Christ as the firstborn of God and that He would redeem those stained with sin and that His sacrifice would be the price paid to buy back the precious souls of those whom God loved so dearly.