

13. Redemption (1Q 2016—Rebellion and Redemption)

Biblical material: Rev. 20:1–3, Jer. 4:23–26, 1 Cor. 4:5, Rev. 20:7–15, Phil. 2:9–11, 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 21:4.

Quotes

- The idea of redemption is always good news, even if it means sacrifice or some difficult times. *Patti Smith*
- Life is full of constant ups and downs, and all I ask for is redemption in the end. *Robin Thicke*
- At the cross God wrapped his heart in flesh and blood and let it be nailed to the cross for our redemption. *E. Stanley Jones*
- If Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be, and He did die on a cross at a point of time in history, then, for all history past and all history future it is relevant because that is the very focal point for forgiveness and redemption. *Josh McDowell*
- Our redemption through the suffering of Christ is that deeper love within us which not only frees us from slavery to sin, but also secures for us the true liberty of the children of God, in order that we might do all things out of love rather than out of fear - love for him that has shown us such grace that no greater can be found. *Peter Abelard*
- Won't you help to sing / These songs of freedom? / 'Cause all I ever had / Redemption songs. *Bob Marley*

Questions

How does our redemption fit into the Great Controversy? What is our role in speaking well of God as witnesses for the truth? In what way is the Devil defeated? The end of the wicked can seem vindictive and punitive—what is our answer to this? How is God finally shown to be the loving Father he has always been?

Bible summary

The final end of the Great Controversy is revealed in Revelation 20-22, chapter which are well worth re-reading. The cataclysmic events are described in Jer. 4:23–26. The unveiling (that's what the word *revelation* really means) which is the judgment is declared in 1 Cor. 4:5. But the way God wins is through humility, not by the exercise of overwhelming power--see Phil. 2—which results in the exaltation of Jesus. The end time renewal (2 Pet. 3:10) should not terrify us since it is part of God's recreating process to restore harmony throughout the universe.

Comment

What is God's mission? While what matters most to us is our redemption, God's primary mission is to answer the charges of the Devil, and to vindicate the truth through redeeming the whole universe back to himself.

As we stand with God, witnessing to his saving love and grace, we help answer the charges. We are a spectacle to angels and to men, we are his ambassadors. But sometimes we forget, and we fall by the wayside. That's why we need to be re-awakened,

to be revived, to be restored. We can all admit our faults and failings, knowing we are far from the true children of God we wish to be. God's promise is to be there for us, to heal the damage of sin as we ask him, and to change us into the kind of beings we were originally intended to be.

Why did Jesus come? "I have come as a light shining into the world, so if you trust in me you won't remain in the dark." "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 12:46, 8:32 FBV). Christ came to show what God was really like (John 14:9), to liberate us from the false concepts of God promoted by the Devil. In that sense, Jesus was primarily concerned with freedom, and to set humanity free from the slavery to sin and false ideas of God. In fact, that is Christ's opening statement in His manifesto: quoting from Isaiah 61 "to proclaim freedom for the prisoners." (Luke 4:18 NIV).

And if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed, says Jesus in John 8:36. Free from what to what? Free from the *compulsion* that sin is the force that the Devil uses in his program of lies and deception. Free from this self-centered way of living which is in reality a way of dying. Free from ourselves—our own worst enemy. "Christ set us free so we could have real freedom." (Galatians 5:1 FBV).

Free to choose—to choose the God who values nothing higher than the freedom of His created beings. Free to follow the best advice—the advice of our Maker, the One who we find to be true and trustworthy. Free to love God—which we cannot do while we are busy loving ourselves; free to love from an open and honest heart that willingly and freely agrees that God is truly right.

The choice is not "Do as I say, or else!" It is a plea from a heart of love that refuses to interfere with our freedom to choose, saying "Look at the evidence. Believe what I tell you, because you can see that it is proved true. Come to me and find healing from sin, comfort for your pain, and an eternal life together with me. Come: for if you don't, I can't help you, and tragically you will experience what sin does to you: utter self-destruction."

God's principles of government are based on these fundamental concepts of choice and free will, of selflessness and love for the other. Without such principles God's universe cannot continue. That is why he has spent so much time at such great cost to himself to demonstrate these core principles—ones that are so very foreign to us as sinful beings.

God intends to liberate us from our selfishness and to change us into the kind of people who are safe to have in his selfless universe. He wants to give us the freedom to choose what is good and true and right, instead of being enslaved by our sinful human nature. This is true freedom, for in our current state we have a bent towards evil. We think we are free, but only God can set us free! This is freedom that lasts forever, freedom that is restricted only by *our* choosing; recognizing that the way chosen by Lucifer can never lead to true happiness and individual fulfillment.

"In the cross we have a glorious revelation of the heart of God. Here, again, Satan has blinded man to the true character of God. In the minds of many he has made God to appear as a blood-thirsty tyrant, demanding the life of the sinner; and if it were not for Jesus Christ, it would be just too bad for man. However, the cross is not a picture of a God demanding a sacrifice of appeasement. Rather, the cross is a picture of a loving Father God giving Himself, through His Son, as a sacrifice of at-one-ment." Paul Heubach, God and Human Suffering, p. 20.

This is how God achieves at-one-ment. For we remain free to choose for eternity—but we will never choose the ill for we know where that leads. That's the reason for the

current experience: this is the evidence that keeps the universe safe forever. God brings us back and makes us one with him, turning us from enemies into friends: “God did all this by changing us from enemies into friends through Christ.” 2 Cor. 5:18 FBV. God’s plan was to “bring everyone together in Christ—those in heaven and those on the earth.” Eph. 1:10 FBV. For “God was pleased to have his full nature live in him, and through him brought back everything in the universe to himself, since he made peace through the blood of his cross, through him reconciling all those on the earth and in heaven.” Col. 1:19, 20 FBV. This is the true meaning of the at-one-ment that God brings about.

The ultimate promise from God is that we shall spend eternity in his presence (Rev 21:3). This is where the Great Controversy ends for us: in the ultimate healing from the ravages of sin so we can spend all eternity in the arms of our loving Lord.

Ellen White Comments

If the veil which separates the visible from the invisible world could be lifted, and the people of God could behold the great controversy that is going on between Christ and holy angels and Satan and his evil hosts concerning the redemption of man; if they could understand the wonderful work of God for the rescue of souls from the bondage of sin, and the constant exercise of His power for their protection from the malice of the evil one, they would be better prepared to withstand the devices of Satan. Their minds would be solemnized in view of the vast extent and importance of the plan of redemption and the greatness of the work before them as colaborers with Christ. They would be humbled, yet encouraged, knowing that all heaven is interested in their salvation. {5T 467}

But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God’s wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which “angels desire to look,” and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which “seeketh not her own” has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto. {DA 19-20}

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. {PP 68}

And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise. {GC 678}