
REDEEMED AND SAYING SO PART IV; LAMBS AND DONKEYS

February 19, 2012

LET THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD... _____ !!!

So we've been on this Say So kick for a while. It all starts with people who are REDEEMED. I've shown you the meaning of that word.

REDEEMED; bought back, purchased, rescued

It's such a strong thing that Jesus has done for us that we should have a brave readiness to Say So. Today I'm going to close out this emphasis on Redemption by giving you the biblical history behind the word and its powerful implications for us.

Think about something that you have / own that is incredibly valuable to you, but probably not to anyone else. Why is it so important to you? To anyone else, it's not much. If you were to try to make a point as to how valuable it is, you would have to make a comparison...or name a price as to what it's worth. Let's say that it is held for ransom...whatever you would offer to get it back would be its redemption value.

You need to remember that you are a part of a grand story, one that God has been telling since the beginning of time. It all starts with a perfect King... God is perfect. He is unable, as pure perfection, to be in the presence, or have a relationship with anyone that is imperfect, or sinful. And with that perfect nature, He is the one that placed value on everything. It was his responsibility to clearly communicate what was valuable. One of the ways He did this was by placing value on the First born, or the First fruits and by placing value on it, he deemed it as His, as belonging to Him. Remember, He is the King of this Kingdom and His ways are what keeps this whole thing going. The whole concept of Kings having things in the Kingdom that rightfully belonged to them came from God.

FIRST BORN, FIRST FRUITS

Over the next few weeks you're going to be hearing a lot about the idea of First Fruits, and First Born. It's the idea that whatever is produced first is God's property. The inhabitants in the Kingdom either go with this idea, or go against it. In other words, they either give their firsts to God or they withhold it. If they go with the King, they then live a life that is blessed by the King. If they go against Him, they live a life that is not blessed...you could make the case they spin that blessing around in the opposite direction, which is actually a curse.

That doesn't mean that God is aiming his lightning bolts at you. It means that by going against the direction of the King intentionally, you are asking for the direct consequences of that rebellious action. Much like pressing on the gas pedal when you see a policeman's lights in your rearview mirror...not smart. *A lot more on this in the next few weeks.*

A good way to get your mind around this is to think of the family dog. At dinner time the dog will usually get accidental spills or drops, or table scraps...whatever is left over from the meal that wasn't eaten. You would never spin that around for a dog...prepare the meal and set it on the floor for the dog to eat, and whatever he doesn't eat the family then consumes...nasty. The sad thing is that people treat God this way all the time. So spin those letters around...D O G; G O D

And as you spin those letters around, spin that action around as well. God doesn't get the lasts, or the scraps left over...He wants the firsts. In fact, whether you give it to him or not, the firsts belong to Him. So you either live with the momentum of that fact, or you live in opposition to it. *More on this as well in the coming weeks.*

So, let's get to the Biblical history...remember this is all about Redemption. God makes his point early about first fruits. One of the earliest is with Adam and Eve's two sons, Cain and Able.

GENESIS 4:2-5 ²Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.

Here in the earliest of days God is making a point about his value of the firsts. Here we see Able offering his firsts to God as a sacrifice. This theme will continue to Moses.

Exodus 13:1-2 ¹The LORD said to Moses, ²“Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal.”

So we see here that the firstborn is the property of God...whether man or animal. He continues, what Moses and the Israelites were supposed to do about this.

Exodus 13:12-13 ¹²you are to give over to the LORD the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the LORD. ¹³Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every firstborn among your sons.

So it's vital that you understand something about this principle of the firsts, they were either sacrificed or redeemed, that's it. No other option is given. But take a look at the distinctions made; we have "clean" and "unclean". The lamb is used as the ultimate example of a clean animal. In this context, the donkey is used as an example of the unclean.

So this is it, as soon as a mama sheep gives birth her firstborn male lamb, that animal was sacrificed to God as an offering. You could say that this life of the firstborn was given back to God in the form of an offering and the reason that animal was acceptable as an offering is because it was considered a "clean" animal.

On the other hand...as soon as a mama donkey gave birth to her firstborn male foal, that animal was considered "unclean". This animal was not acceptable as offering material and so, it faced either one of two futures... 1) If it was to be judged on its own merits, it was simply put to death or 2) If the owner wanted to keep that animal alive, it must be redeemed by what? And why would the owner want to keep that donkey? As a pet? No. To do work for the owner, to carry and haul stuff. So...what is the redemptive price of a firstborn male donkey? a perfect, sacrificial, firstborn lamb.

To summarize: the clean firstborn had to be sacrificed and the unclean firstborn had to be redeemed, or it would die. Do you see how God is meticulous and precise as to how he is placing value on things, and how he is taking care of something that is imperfect?

NOW...FAST FORWARD TO JOHN THE BAPTIST.

With all that in mind about the history of the redemptive value of the unclean and the role of the clean. Consider what John the Baptist said when he looked up one day and saw Jesus Christ walking toward him.

John 1:29 29The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

You see it? With that incredible declaration, John the Baptist perfectly described the role that Jesus Christ came to fulfill. Remember that the law in Exodus stated that if the firstborn animal was clean it was to be sacrificed, but if the firstborn was unclean it was to be redeemed with a clean animal. Jesus was the firstborn of God the Father.

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Jesus was clean, perfect, spotless: perfect offering material and what are we? Unclean in every way and unfit for sacrifice...we are the donkey (great...another wonderful mascot for the human race...lol).

We were born sinful, imperfect, and in that state, deserving of death. Our sin equals death, our sin is our death...it's the part of us that must be saved so that we don't die. Our only hope is to be redeemed by something perfect. This is exactly why the sacrificial system was invented in the first place. As a solution for perfect God to have a connection with imperfect people... people who were originally created in His image, but who, because of their God given freedom of choice, chose the wrong tree.

God could have ended the story right there but instead came up with a perfect plan of connection and relationship. But now, in order to truly make mankind free from this cycle, Jesus walks onto the scene as God's firstborn...and He was sent to be sacrificed to redeem us. He was literally the firstborn, or first fruits offering from God the Father and God gave this offering before we ever believed in Him.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

I often wonder if the angels get it. Just like you valued your item... You could try to explain what its worth to you, or you could just show me. This is God's way of showing just how valuable we are to him.

Consider the offering baskets...It's called an "offering" for a reason...we make our offerings and place them, in faith, in this basket. When we do that, we are doing back to God what He did for us in the first place...giving from our firsts, not scraping off the plate what is left over at the end of the month. He asks us now of our resources...But consider what He put in this basket... His leftovers? Hardly.

II CORINTHIANS 5:21 God (the Father) gave Him (Jesus, God the Son) who knew no sin (death), to become sin (death) for us (donkeys), so, in Him, that we might become the righteousness of God (perfect, or perfectly redeemed).

So what is your response?

Your first should be incredible, unspeakable, truly heartfelt appreciation. Next, you should accept and receive this redemption by being saved. Remember, the redemption price has been set for you. You are worth the very life and death of the perfect Jesus Christ. That price has been paid but God doesn't force that transaction on your life. You must accept this transaction in your heart. If you want your redemption to be active in your life, you can't live a life in opposition to the King. You must receive that salvation, that redemption, if you are to enter this Kingdom. And then, as *Psalms 107* says...Say So

ROMANS 10:9-10 ⁹That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.