

REDEMPTION

(The Series)



By

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INTRODUCTION

What does redemption mean to you? We assume so much about our lives in Christ. Such assumptions lead to presumptions. In other words, we assume we know; therefore, we presume there is nothing more to explore about the subject.

Through the years, I have pondered the matter of redemption. I hear people make reference to it, but when it comes to redemption in regards to our spiritual lives, it is a subject that may be simple to understand, but will prove profound when it is considered from God's perspective.

This e-book is a series on redemption that was presented in our monthly newsletter. Although this series can be accessed through our website, I felt it was important to put in together and present it as an e-book. Even though this book simply touches the surface of this subject, it is my hope that believers will come out with a greater appreciation for what it cost God to truly redeem us, and what it means for our Christian walk.

1

OPPRESSION

As some of you may know, I have struggled with the English language most of my life. Because of how I have heard words in my formative years, I had to receive speech therapy in the fourth grade. This struggle was also greatly evident when trying to communicate my thoughts and ideas on paper.

Since English rules change and many of its words or terms came from other languages, I used to blame my challenges on the language itself. However, after working with some different cultures, I began to appreciate the English language. I could see how it provided various words to best express the meaning or intent of ideas, while some of the other languages did not always separate different words with similar points of identification as a means to bring distinction or clarity. For example, the words redemption and consecration would be lumped with the word salvation.

As I found myself defining words in order to bring clarity when teaching non-English speaking people, I began to appreciate my native tongue. Although considered by some a garbage language, I learned that if presented in the proper light, the English language is a language that can paint powerful pictures when bringing distinction and meaning to a word.

One of the words that fascinated me in my studies is the word, "redemption." Granted, I had my assumed notions about what I thought redemption meant, but after studying the word, I found my notions or assumptions to be vague. Such discoveries often challenge me to consider what I really do understand when it came to the words that are consistently found in Scripture.

When considering what other subject I needed to address in our monthly newsletter, the word, "redemption" came to my attention. As believers who are facing the uncertainty of the days in which we live, it would serve us well to come to terms with what it means to be redeemed. We may sing about it, hear the word mentioned occasionally in some sermon or teaching, and we may even read about it once in awhile, but how many of us understand what it really means to be redeemed?

As I began to consider the concepts about redemption, I started to see the outline for another series. Redemption is not just a one-time subject. It is the main theme running throughout the Bible. The references to it are many, and the implications far reaching. Obviously, it is not a word that should be vague to us as believers. We need to know what it means to understand our relationship to God and our rights in His kingdom.

To understand redemption, we must come to terms with the environment that requires redemption. The main environment that requires such intervention has to do with someone being taken captive by circumstances or by captors who are seeking means to control, blackmail, or seek ransom. Such an environment points to some type of captivity or oppression. Clearly, people who are not in captivity or oppressed do not have any need to be redeemed.

The idea of redemption points to repurchasing, ransoming, rescuing, procuring, attaining, and possessing something that is held in some type of captivity or bondage. When you study the concept of redemption in the Old Testament, the first promise God gave in *Genesis 3:15* had to do with redeeming man. Because of man sinning in the Garden of Eden, all mankind has been taken into captivity by sin. People are slaves to sin, under the harsh taskmaster of Satan, facing the bondage of hopelessness in this dark world, and the consequences of death. Clearly, Satan has become the god over man in his fallen condition, sin has become his master, the world his

prison and tormentor, and death his unbearable chains that hold him steadfast in his spiritual plight.

Obviously, mankind needed to be redeemed. He had fallen from his original state of innocence before his Maker into a state of oppression and bondage. For him to be restored back to his original place before his Creator, God would have to repurchase or ransom him. After all, who would put any type of value on man other than the one who created him for a specific purpose?

Praise God, He did pay the ultimate ransom for His people. However, before He repurchased humanity, He began to present a mosaic of what this ransom would entail in the Old Testament. We are about to consider this incredible thread that God cleverly weaved throughout His presentation. To me, it is a wondrous picture that is void of any confusion, debate or misunderstanding. Let us now summarize this presentation.

Redeeming a people: The first great example of redemption happened when God redeemed the people of Israel from under the tyrannical bondage of Pharaoh. God did not redeem ideas, buildings, or lands, but a nation of people. After all, what became lost in the garden was man. It was man's lost state that caused creation to spin out of control, doomed to groan under a fallen state.

To acquire a people, God first had to choose and call a man named Abraham to journey to a land He would promise to his descendants. Out of Abraham would come a great nation. This nation would eventually be enslaved. It would be in this captivity that God would actually claim and win this nation for Himself. He would have a people that would become His possession in which He could bring forth the actual payment to buy back humanity.

In their slavery, the descendants of Abraham would understand that they needed to be redeemed. They were slaves in a harsh land. The whips of oppressive man served as their bitter cup, the endless drudgery as their hopeless despair, and the threat of death to their future generations their promise. There was no escape from their oppressive lot. They were born into slavery and from all appearances, they would die slaves, paupers in a land that they were considered foreigners in.

However, God had chosen them to be His people. He not only knew what it would take to win their release, but He had the means to do so. It is vital we understand the steps He took to procure their release.

He first claimed them as His own. It must be pointed out that the people of Israel did not belong to Pharaoh. He had not gained them in any battle, he had simply enslaved them because they were considered foreigners. This is why there is no purchase mentioned at this point.

Before people claim something as belonging to them, they must first have a former claim on it. To God, these people were to be His heritage. His claim on them went back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is from this premise that a price would begin to formulate. It is amazing what price God put on the children of Israel. It was not a price He would pay; rather, Pharaoh would end up dictating the amount of the payment as he failed to win the battle with Jehovah God for the people of Israel.

The example of Israel also revealed that the payment would come from outside of those who are held captive. People who are enslaved have no means in which to redeem themselves. Pharaoh and all of Egypt would end up paying most of the price for the release of the children of Israel. Let us consider this price.

Vengeance: Vengeance is associated with redemption. Often, captives have been unfairly or violently taken for some type of gain. Sometimes, in order to rescue captives, it takes acts of vengeance. God would exact ten judgments on Egypt to procure the release of the children of Israel. Each price exacted from Pharaoh proved to be more devastating. It is the final judgment that would not only cause the children of Israel to be released, but it would point to the payment God would make on our behalf.

Death of the first born: Pharaoh was trying to control and eventually wipe out any record of the people of Israel's existence by trying to kill all their male babies. However, the final judgment that was leveled at Pharaoh caused all of Egypt, including Pharaoh's household, to lose their first-born sons along with the first-born males of their flocks. What a price to pay, but we get a small glimpse into the price God would pay when His only begotten Son died on our behalf.

The Passover Lamb: Every aspect of this lamb had to be utilized by the people of Israel in their deliverance. The blood of the lamb identified and separated the children of Israel from the judgment of death. The lamb took the vengeance of death in the place of every Hebrew. Its blood pointed to the payment for sin. After all, only the blood can remit or provide pardon from sin. The meat was used as food.

John the Baptist introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. He became God's payment for our sin. Vengeance fell upon Him as He took the judgment of sin upon Himself. His blood established a new covenant, His life became the bread we must partake of to live, His will, word, and purpose would serve as the meat that would bring spiritual maturity, and His Spirit would empower us to walk in this new life according to God's will.

As you can see, the concept of redemption is far reaching. The question we must ask is, "are we marked by redemption?" We all need to be redeemed because of sin. Sin has wreaked a vengeance on each of us, but we have been given a way out of such bondage through the provision of the Lamb of God.

As we embark into a new year, let us above all else resolve the matter of Jesus' redemption.

2 LORDSHIP

The consistent theme that runs through the Bible is redemption. But, how many of us understand the significance of this work. We sing songs about it and know that Jesus completed it on the cross, but it appears that some, or possibly many of us do not understand the real implications behind this incredible work. The reason I say this is because it appears that there are those in the Christian realm who do not live as if they are redeemed.

Perhaps it is because these individuals do not understand what it means to be redeemed. They may have some appreciation behind being delivered from a bad or hopeless state, but they do not realize that Jesus did not come to “simply” save us from a bad situation; rather, He came to save us from ourselves. Granted, our master was sin, but sin finds its inroads into our lives through our selfish, unregenerate disposition. In such a state, we are not only enemies of God, but we often become our own worst enemy.

This brings us to the one aspect people struggle with in regard to salvation, and that is the concept that they cannot be as bad as the Bible states. Surely, there has to be something good or beneficial in them that is redeemable or salvageable. The world’s philosophy that we must look for the “good” in all men confirms these people’s particular take on the matter. Although some of these individuals may maintain that they believe the Bible, they quickly separate themselves from Scriptures that would declare there is no “good” in them. They console themselves in their worldly, psychological view about possessing personal “goodness” by applying such negative or hard Scriptures about the depravity of man to others who would clearly fit such criteria.

The Bible is clear. These Scriptures are not just applicable to those who are bad or rough around the edges, but to each and every one of us. Unlike merchandise at a store, we were not purchased because we had value, worth or were needed, but we needed to be ransomed because there was no worth outside of what God was willing to put on us. For example, you would not ransom someone you did not know or liked (*Romans 5:7*). It was God who chose to ransom us because He was the one who was willing to do so.

Scripture has made this clear even in regard to the children of Israel. Through the Old Testament you can see where the people of Israel started out insignificant. Their identity to Jehovah God was based on a covenant that He had made with men who were long dead. The people had become slaves, foreigners in a land that had no regard for them. Plans were devised to even destroy their identity as a nation by killing all the male children upon their birth. However, Jehovah God would not forget His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It did not matter that there were none to hold Him accountable to it. He could not forget because of who He was and is and always will be.

Jehovah God knew the stiff-necked ways of the descendants of Israel. He recognized that they were not only slaves to Egypt, but they were enslaved to the idolatrous and pagan practices of the society they had become subservient in. They had no rights as a people, they had no privileges as servants, and they had no value or future as slaves. They were poor and had nothing to offer except to be slaves.

It was Jehovah God who put a price on the people of Israel. He made them valuable by making them the apple of His eye. He was the one who redeemed them and lifted them out of the status of slaves to deliver them as a people, a nation that would serve as a light in the midst of great darkness. He talked about this deliverance by using this analogy in *Exodus*

19:4, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you unto myself."

The people of Israel had nothing to offer God. Yet, He chose to become their Lord God. "Lord" points to owner. He took ownership of them in order to deliver them. You cannot redeem something unless you are willing to take full ownership of it. You cannot pay a partial payment and maintain ownership of something. You must make full payment or restitution if redemption is to take place.

Did God's redemption of the people of Israel imply they would remain as slaves? Ownership means exactly what it is. You own what you have purchased or redeemed. That which was purchased has no right to determine its use or status. A purchase becomes the property of that person who redeemed it. However, something that is used or valued after the purchase will rest with the character of the owner.

God is not a tyrant. He does not oversee a tyrannical government or kingdom. He did not redeem the people of Israel because He wanted slaves. He redeemed the people of Israel because He made a promise to Abraham that out of His descendants the Promised One would emerge to prove to be a blessing to all people of all nations. He redeemed the people because He chose to love them, take them as His espoused wife in a relationship that pointed to the excellent desire and plan He had for them as a people (*Hosea 2*).

It must be continually stressed that we all serve something. We are born into some type of slavery (*Romans 6:16-20*). We are either born into the oppressive slavery of sin, or we are born again into the kingdom of God to become servants and instruments of the Most High God. The truth is we do not belong to ourselves. In America, we can purport our freedom as a people, but we are indeed enslaved to systems of the world, whether it be financial, governmental or religious, we are clearly enslaved to something.

God came to deliver us from this present world's systems to give us a choice as to whom or what we will serve. Like the children of Israel, He had to take responsibility for each of us in our desperate lost state. Because of our slavery to sin, we had nothing to offer Him. Due to the curse of our corruptible flesh, we were held captive, and because of our ongoing debt to God's Law and the world's systems, we had no means to change our status. The fact that we were born under a death sentence revealed that we had no hope of ever changing our state. Clearly, sin was our master, the flesh our prison, the world our prison chains, and death our executioner.

God chose to pay the price for our redemption. The price was not only high, but it was precious. He paid for our release with the very life of His only begotten Son. Since He paid for our redemption, He owns us. The Apostle Paul makes clear reference to this in *1 Corinthians 6:20*, "For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Our bodies are considered the temples of God. We must not come into agreement with the unholy by fornicating or prostituting ourselves with that which is contrary to the holy nature and ways of God (*1 Corinthians 6:13-19*). We should be bringing glory to God by our lives, not a reproach to Him.

In *1 Corinthians 7:22-23*, the Apostle Paul said this, "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman; likewise, also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men." We are not here to live unto ourselves, heap the things of the world upon our flesh to feed its lust, or do as we please in matters. We have not been redeemed for ourselves, but redeemed for God's purpose. He has set us apart as a special people, designated to be presented to Him as His bride in the future.

We may be freemen, but such freedom allots us the opportunity to love and serve our Lord with everything in us. Granted, we are free to serve Him in the ways we choose to serve

Him, but we also risk hearing these words, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

The word “Lord” points to owner. I have often made this distinction between Jesus serving as Israel’s King, but as blood bought saints, He is referred to as our Lord. Israel understood the term “Lord.” They knew that the LORD God was their owner. However, as a nation, they wanted a physical king. For us, we are placed in the unseen kingdom of God, which brings us under the reign of our blessed King, Jesus Christ. We understand citizenship, and to some extent as to what it means for Jesus to be sovereign king over His unseen kingdom.

However, the one term we have a hard time understanding is “Lord.” Kings have subjects, but lords have servants. Subjects are to be ruled over as a collective body, because the King must maintain and protect the integrity of his kingdom. Lords oversee servants for they are responsible for their personal welfare. Kings do not own their subjects, but lords own their servants. Kings are to protect the kingdom to ensure its function for the benefit of their subjects, but lords are to personally take care of the needs of their servants to ensure the function of their household. Subjects must be loyal to the king, while good servants should and must be personally committed and attentive to their Lord’s will.

As you can see, kings hold the position of authority, but lords have secured the right to have their position. They own the servant. It has cost them in some way to secure this particular place of ownership in the servant’s life.

This brings us to the term “Lord.” Consider what the Apostle Paul stated, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10)*. The apostle states that we must confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus to ensure salvation. What relationship is established up front? That Jesus is our owner. He has taken full responsibility for our spiritual welfare with the intent to save us. Since we cannot save ourselves, He had to take personal ownership of us as a means to redeem us. However, this ownership means we belong to the one who has purchased us. From this point, we have become His servant with no rights other than what He allots us. We actually need to confess that without His ownership there would be no personal identification proving that we have been redeemed or purchased by Him.

It is upon confession of our Redeemer that we are able to believe in our heart that He is alive. The grave could not hold Him after He had paid the complete price of His life for our redemption. He was raised from the dead to live evermore as our Lord, our Redeemer in the courts of heaven. He is not dead, but alive! If He is alive, we as believers have the responsibility of recognizing our vocations as His servants and coming into His household to serve Him according to His instructions and commands. The apostle summarized it by saying that with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

As I meditated on why God’s people do not act as if they are redeemed, I realized the key was that they have never really come into the Lord’s household as His consecrated servants. They have never really made it a point to belong to Him. If they did, they would have to deny themselves to live as they please, do as they will, and be whatever they desire. Due to such a state, they have not ceased to live like a slave to sin, serve the whims of the idolatrous flesh, and bow down to the foolish ways of the pagan world. Once again, we must remember we are going to serve something. As Joshua clearly stated to the children of Israel when he put forth this challenge to them, *“Now, therefore, fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the Euphrates, and in Egypt, and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the*

other side of the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:14-15).

Most Christians simply quote the last part of *verse 15*, while failing to elaborate on the fact that a great river or gulf separates the different masters. God is on one side of the river or gulf, while all other taskmasters reside on the other side. As servants in the household of God, we will learn what it means to be His children who are truly being raised up as heirs to an eternal inheritance. We will know what it means to serve a just, fair, and loving master. We will know what it means to live as redeemed people who were once dangling on the abyss of destruction, but were borne up as if on the wings of an eagle by a loving God.

When was the last time you meditated on redemption? When was the last time you realized that you had no value to offer God for His intervention and deliverance? Yet, because of who He is, He chose to commend His love towards you by allowing His Son to become the ultimate sacrifice on the brutal instrument of the cross. He did it not because you held any real worth or value, but because out of His holiness, love, mercy, and grace He put a price on you that He willingly paid to bring you unto Himself.

Why would He do such an act? Surely, it was not because of any good or righteousness in us. Regardless of how we try to convince ourselves, there is nothing redeemable in us for our holy God considers our best as filthy rags (*Isaiah 64:6*). Even though we think there might be something worthwhile to salvage in us, there is no good or beneficial thing in our flesh that would ever be desired by Him (*Romans 6:18*). Although we might try to flatter ourselves that we do possess some winning way, the truth is we are born in a state that deems us lost sinners, utterly separated from Him. We were lost to God, lost in our own form of darkness of delusion, ignorance and corruption. Without embracing His redemption, an individual remains 100 percent lost to all that is holy, right and good.

We need to get this deep into our spirit. We need to quit buying the world's humanistic nonsense that leads us back to man, or the world, being the solutions to the matters that ail humanity, causing us to serve harsh, uncaring taskmasters while selling our souls. The very nonsense that we are willing to enslave ourselves to such taskmasters proves that our attempts to believe that there must be some "good" in us is a lie. God's Word is clear that the only one who is good is God. There is no moral fiber in man that can withstand God's holiness once such "goodness" is put to the fire. Granted, man may be decent about matters and moral in his conduct, but in and of himself he possesses no inward moral fiber that can stand in light of God's holiness. God clearly put a price on us and willingly paid it to afford us the luxury of choosing who we are going to ultimately serve.

Which side of glory did you choose to stand on? Is it on the side where the darkness of idolatry and paganism reigns or is it in the household of God where your Redeemer truly is Lord? If Jesus is Lord, it should and will be obvious that you have indeed been redeemed.

3

ARE YOU STILL LOST IN SOME WAY?

We have been considering redemption. In my initial years of being a Christian, I sensed redemption was important, but I never really understood the implications of it. I knew it somehow was significant concerning my salvation, but like many subjects, it remained vague.

As I studied the Bible and begin to build a foundation on the different aspects of God's work on my behalf, redemption would come to the forefront to often catch my attention. Precept upon precept, line upon line in regard to this subject began to unveil a wondrous picture from the Scriptures (*Isaiah 28:10*). I was sometimes awed and overwhelmed by the glimpses I was allowed to see through my different studies.

What I discovered is that we Christians have a rich legacy. You may think to yourself, "Well, I have always known that, where have you been?" I have known about many things too, but until there is revelation to one's spirit, it does not mean that we really have come to an understanding about a matter. Until we have some type of basis in which to regard something, there is no way that we can truly know it.

As I studied the theme of redemption, one of its aspects that became obvious was this: As believers, we were redeemed from tyrannical slavery and delivered so that we can be restored to something that has been lost to us. When you consider what was lost to us, and how it affects us, we must travel back in time to a place known as the "Garden of Eden."

God had created a special garden or paradise just for man. His purpose for establishing a paradise was so He could fellowship with the first man. Our Creator rightfully wanted to enjoy His perfect creation, and He wanted man to enjoy and prize the fellowship he would have with his Creator in such a place. As Scripture states, the Lord had considered all that He had done as being good, beneficial or pleasurable.

Perhaps we can take a moment to consider the type of environment that Adam lived in. The first man walked with God in this garden. God was not just part of the creation; rather, He was the reason for it. He was not merely tacked on to Adam's activities; rather, He was to be the center focus of it. God was not there strictly for Adam's pleasures or whims; rather, He was to define and remind Adam who served as the real source and significance to his well-being.

When Adam rebelled, he became lost. Since redemption was God's way of salvation where we are concerned, it is vital we understand in what ways Adam became lost. As Christians, we start our Christian life from the premise that we were lost, but it is only as we come to terms with the life that we have in Christ can we even begin to understand in what ways we were lost. Sadly, there are some in the Christian realm where aspects of the Christian life continue to remain lost to them. These individuals often wonder why they fail to see victory or results.

Various things became lost to Adam. Even though Adam had no idea as to the extent that his rebellious actions would cause man to become lost, he knew up front in his fallen state that he could not walk with God due to his shame. Obviously, the first thing that became lost was man's fellowship with God. It had been broken. Adam was no longer on the same page as God. Instead of meeting with his Creator in the cool of the evening, he would have to hide from him behind some type of covering, in the shadows of uncertainty, and under the darkness of sin and death. Clearly, God had become lost to Adam, and even though God knew where Adam was, Adam had also become lost to Him. There was no more fellowship or familiarity between them.

The problem with being lost spiritually is that people may know there is a spiritual vacuum, but they do not know exactly what they are looking for. Have you ever gone on a search for something that you were not sure what it looked like? Those around you have even described it to you in order to assist you, but in most cases, you will not find it even if you looked straight at it because you are unfamiliar with it.

This is the way God has become lost to the human race. Even though people have a sense that they are looking for God to address their spiritual vacuum, they do not recognize Him because He has become lost to them. They are blinded, unable to see Him. Unless the scales are taken from their affected eyes, they will never see who He is no matter how hard they grope through their darkness. Case in point, the woman at the well was looking for the Messiah (*John 4:19-25*). When He stood before her, she did not recognize Him. He first proved He was a true prophet of God before He introduced Himself to her as being the one she was looking for.

Consider the people of Israel. They knew what to look for in order to recognize their Messiah. However, when their Messiah stood in their midst and revealed and confirmed His identity by fitting all the Scriptural criteria, how many truly recognized Him? In the end, His few remaining followers scattered when He was crucified by the cleverly orchestrated and urgent prompting of the spiritual leaders of the nation of Israel.

It is for this reason the good Shepherd had to find us (*Luke 15:3-7*). He knows where we are in our spiritual plight, but since we are no longer familiar to Him, He had to find us in the midst of the unfamiliar terrain of sin and death. In order to become familiar with us, He allowed Himself to be fashioned as a man as a means to redeem us. It is at the point of redemption that He could once again find us. He would be able to buy back His lost sheep from the hireling shepherds and the tyrannical taskmasters, as well as pull them out of the clutches of destructive predators.

The second thing that became lost to Adam was the essence of life. Adam had a rich, complete life in the garden. In his fallen condition, he ended up with a form of life that would be plagued by the very workings of death. This existence might initially point to great hope and expectation, but in the end, at best, it would be marked by a silent tombstone that would eventually fall into ruin. All that would be attached to man's present life would remind him that the matters of his life in this world would always be marked by the finality of that which would ultimately prove to be temporary, full of vanity, and empty of all promise and hope.

The harsh reality of being lost to the essence of real life is that people do not know where to look to find life. There are so many who are searching to find life that makes sense and is satisfying. In their attempts to find such a life they often pursue fanciful notions about how something is going to make them happy in their present existence. They look to worldly relationships, which often causes them to taste the bitterness of being hurt, angry or disappointed. They look to material things, only to end up being more dissatisfied with its vanity. They sometimes pursue noble causes, only to eventually become weary with the never-ending needs and plight of humanity.

The truth is real life cannot be found in what we can see, but in whom we cannot see. It will not be found in a particular lifestyle that can be acquired, but in a relationship with the living God. This life is not discovered in things of the world, but in a person named Jesus Christ. It is not found in the great causes of man, but in the great work of redemption that was accomplished on the cross by the Son of God. Once again, we are reminded that God finds us. The Father who begins to draw us to the Son, the Son whose voice breaks through our dull senses with the invitation to come to Him to partake of the Living Water, and the Holy Spirit convicts us of our plight and need as He leads us to our Lord and Savior.

The third thing that became lost to Adam was paradise. Instead of living in a perfect environment, man would from that point on toil, sweat, mourn, and taste the bitterness of an

environment that would now prove chaotic and uncertain. This out-of-control environment would never be tamed or disciplined. In such an environment, man would forever sense that "Paradise" had become lost to him, and all of his attempts to find or recreate it would also prove to be illusive.

When paradise became lost to man, he had to somehow find or recreate a place of peace or refuge from the tumultuous environment around him. How many great adventurers tried to discover the fountain of life, the hidden treasures of a new world or possible freedom from a tyrannical government in a new land? How many people have spoken of the city on the hill that would serve as a true light and refuge for those who were and are foreigners in heart, refugees in soul and downtrodden in status?

There is a city that awaits the broken hearted, the wandering soul, and the restless pilgrim. This city is not of the present world (*Hebrews 11:10*). However, there is a map that contains the directions, and record, that is capable of leading each of us to this incredible place. It is known as the inspired Word of God. However, there are a couple of issues that keep individuals from being able to benefit from this map. The first one being that man hates asking for directions. Many people have no idea how to read the map, and most will not ask for the proper instructions to do so. Since they will not humble themselves under the leading of God's Spirit, many lack the necessary compass that would enable them to benefit from this spiritual map (*John 16:13; 1 John 2:27*).

The fourth thing that was lost was purpose. Adam knew who he was in the garden, and what his purpose was in the scheme of things. Nothing was dysfunctional, uncertain or foolish. Everything had its place, reason and use. When Adam sinned, he changed the order of things. He removed himself out from under the auspice of God. From that point, he became lost to his real function and potential. Man became like a cork, lost in the sea of humanity, bouncing from one wave to another.

People often prove to be fickle, unstable and untrustworthy in all they do. At times, they appear to find some stable ground, only to be set adrift with a new tide. They struggle with their identity, wrestle with how they are defined by others, and unsure of where they are going to land.

This is the harsh plight of humanity. Many do not realize that the redemption secured by Christ allows them to be found. They do not recognize this great work of God is also about restoring what has been lost. It was not enough for our Creator to buy each of us back from the clutches of slavery and death; He also needed to restore us back to man's original status that was lost in the first garden.

Next month I will be looking at what such restoration entails for you and me. Meanwhile, meditate on what was lost to each of us because of the actions of our first parents. Consider if any aspect of God, His life or His purpose continues to remain lost to you. the order of things. He removed himself out from under the auspice of God. From that point, he became lost to his real function and potential. Man became like a cork, lost in the sea of humanity, bouncing from one wave to another.

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REDEMPTION (The Series)

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4

INHERITANCE

Last chapter I talked about what man has become lost to, and how redemption was the means in which God would be able to restore what was lost. What has been lost in the Garden of Eden was man's relationship with God, the essence of life, paradise, and purpose or direction. There is also something else that became lost to all mankind because of the action of the first parents and that is spiritual inheritance.

What inheritance did God intend for our first parents? We know that the inheritance promised to the children of Israel was comprised of a physical and spiritual inheritance. The physical part of the inheritance had to do with the Promised Land in order to bring forth the Promised Messiah, but the spiritual part of their inheritance had to do with the Law as well as the promises attached to the covenants that God made with such men as Abraham and David.

For Christians, our inheritance is mainly spiritual. In fact, we have been given a seal until the fullness of our inheritance can be realized. The seal is the Holy Spirit (*Ephesians 1:11-14*). This brings us to our inheritance as Christians. What is it? Consider what Ephesians 1:14 states about this matter: "Who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." The earnest or down payment of our inheritance is the Holy Spirit, but our inheritance as believers is the fullness of redemption in light of complete restoration.

It is vital to understand how our inheritance works. Let us consider the implications of inheritance. When you study it in light of Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, it is associated with possession, purpose, portion secured by acquisition, heritage, lots, part, allotment, assignment, privilege, and heirloom. It points to distribute, something divided, bequest, occupation, and mode of descent.

We know that others often acquire an inheritance, but if we are somehow related to or recognized by the one who acquires it, we can benefit from it. However, to benefit from an inheritance usually means the benefactor is dead. In many cases an inheritance is divided; thereby, those who are on the receiving end will receive a portion of the inheritance available. This portion points to some type of law or regulation governing how an inheritance will be broken up and divided. In the case of God, this is where covenants and promises often come into the picture. As Christians, we are part of a covenant that has been carefully outlined in the New Testament.

In most cases inheritance is meant to serve as a point of heritage that is attached to birthright, custom or legacy. It clearly becomes a point of identification. However, it is also meant to be passed down in some way to maintain a legacy.

The other aspect of inheritance is that of possession. Sometimes the rules and regulations governing the inheritance will have stipulations attached to them. Conditions must first be met before those who can benefit from it can actually possess it. In some cases, these regulations reveal that the benefactor is trying to maintain the integrity of the inheritance. People have been known to squander or neglect the inheritance instead of wisely using it to establish an ongoing legacy that will also benefit others down the line. Hence enters the warning to Christians not to neglect the salvation that has been entrusted to them (*Hebrews 2:3*). In other situations the conditions can also imply that the benefactor is still trying to control matters from the grave.

We see with the children of Israel that their inheritance was actually acquired by God. It did involve Him purchasing them through the sacrifice of the first born of Egypt, even though

He laid claim to them long before they became totally lost to their inheritance and purpose as a distinct people.

A Passover Lamb was also sacrificed. The children of Israel were to utilize every bit of it to ensure their deliverance. The blood of the Passover Lamb also identified those who were to be spared from the judgment that was about to befall the people of Egypt. We know that the Passover Lamb pointed to Jesus.

When our first parents became lost to their inheritance, they primarily became lost to the very life God had ordained for them in the Garden of Eden. When they became lost to the life that was ordained for them, they also lost their identity in light of God and their legacy. Without identity we do not know who we are, who we can become, and who we are meant to be. Without identity, we have no legacy that will have any real meaning or purpose. Even though man was meant to live forever, there was still a legacy to obtain where he would come to realize his full potential and purpose as one who was uniquely formed by the Creator. The Apostle Paul put it best when he stated that all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (*Romans 3:23*).

In Adam's initial stage he was formed in a state of innocence, but there was more he could have discovered as to the glory he could have experienced if he had become more God-oriented instead of more earthbound. Time and time again we see where the more man becomes caught up with the earthly creation and the activities around him, the more he becomes earthbound. The more earthbound he becomes, the less spiritual he strives to be.

It was clear that there was something amiss in the Garden of Eden when in the beginning of creation, the Lord declared all things to be good, and then we see where it was not good for man to be alone (*Genesis 1:31; 2:18*). Man was not alone in the garden for he had God, but somewhere along the way God ceased to be enough to man.

Jesus is meant to become our all in all (*Colossians 3:11*). The Lord is what man needs, and is able to be all that is necessary to satisfy the desires of the inner man. He alone is man's real legacy. However, there is something that became lost to man, even before his fall. Whether he became lost to his real purpose or legacy is hard to know, but in the end his rebellious actions towards that which represented his real inheritance showed that he was willing to explore the possibilities outside of a life with God and his purpose within creation.

This brings us back to the restoration of what was lost. It could only be obtained through redemption. Man could once again have his inheritance or legacy restored to him. However, the legacy would not be about restoring man in light of regaining the Garden of Eden, but in light of reaching his potential in relationship to the life and glory that God wanted man to initially experience.

Oswald Chambers explained how Adam was intended to reflect the glory of God in creation, but because of rebellion he failed to reach his potential. Therefore, the second man, Christ Jesus, represented what God intended man to become. He reflected in His teachings, example and ways the distinction and excellence of the glory of God in the midst of creation. For this reason the Apostle Paul penned these words in *2 Corinthians 3:18*, "But we all, with open face beholding in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

We know for the children of Israel, it cost the Egyptians dearly and an innocent lamb its all. In relationship to Christians, it dearly cost God His Son, and cost His Son His all. *Hebrews 9:14-22* tells us that Jesus is our benefactor. Until His death, the testament had no strength. Redemption could only come by way of His death. It was upon His death that we were able to receive our eternal inheritance by faith. We are also told the inheritance that has been made available through Jesus is a much more excellent inheritance than the one that the children of Israel were allotted.

This brings us to our inheritance as Christians. We will inherit the fullness of Christ's life. His life in us will reflect His heavenly glory. As *Colossians 1:27* stated about our real hope, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Clearly, redemption allots believers not only eternal life, but reaching their potential in regard to the heavenly glory that will ultimately be unveiled in their lives.

As Christians, we need to understand our real inheritance because many believers have been erroneously led to believe that much of their inheritance is wrapped up in the things of this world. In some cases these individuals believe that worldly goods reflect how rich and blessed they are when it comes to God. Although God may entrust Christians with worldly blessings, such blessings do not represent their spiritual status before God. The Apostle Paul actually counted all ties or blessing in regard to this present world as dung in light of gaining Christ (*Philippians 3:7-9*). The Laodiceans, who were rich with the things of the world, were considered wretched to the Lord, and that believers who are often poor in light of the world's standards were found to be rich in faith towards God (*James 2:5; Revelation 3:14-19*). Once again, we as believers must remember that the more we become earthbound to the ways and things of the world, the more we will lose our edge as spiritual people. We must never lose sight that our blessings are spiritual, our hope heavenly and our inheritance is eternal.

What do we need to understand about the spiritual inheritance to ensure that we as believers will actually receive it? Here are some points that we need to keep before us.

Identification: Inheritance serves as a point of identification. People who fail to be identified by the life of Christ and the seal of the Spirit will not be privy to this inheritance. Like the first born of Egypt so many years ago, these people will be marked for death and damnation because they have not been properly marked by the blood of the Lamb of God. These individuals may have a worldly inheritance, but they do not have the eternal inheritance that will mark them to receive the inheritance of the world to come.

Status: As Christians, we have been legally adopted into a heavenly family to ensure that we will receive this inheritance. We hold the status of being a child of God, part of the royal heritage of Christ and designed to experience the fullness of His glory. Our moral quality, as God's children, must clearly be distinguished by how we conduct ourselves in the way we live the life that has been entrusted to us. We must not lightly esteem, be flippant or dishonorable as to the legacy we have been entrusted with.

Possessing it: It is not enough to have an inheritance allotted to us, we must be prepared to take possession of it. The children of Israel each had a personal inheritance, but they were instructed to go in and possess it (*Joshua 18:3-10*). For some, that first meant walking the land to understand the value of what they were entrusted with. Most Christians do not understand how rich and valuable their real inheritance is. They have failed to walk out the very life of Christ in order to possess it as their inheritance. Some are actually tarrying instead of occupying until their possession somehow falls into their lap. However, we are told that we must inherit this prized possession (*Galatians 5:17-21*). Paul instructs us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (*Philippians 2:12*). Although our inheritance has been secured and is freely offered to us, we must personally possess the life it promises. Clearly, our goal should be to prepare in this age to properly embrace the fullness of this legacy in the next world to come.

Do you somewhat understand the inheritance that is truly awaiting you? Are you preparing yourself to properly receive it? These are questions we need to answer honestly, for it will determine our attitude in regards to possessing it.

5

THE LAW OF KINSHIP

For the last two chapters, we have been considering redemption in light of inheritance. Due to sin, our real inheritance has become lost to us. This inheritance does not have to do with the fleshly or earthly domain, but with the unseen, heavenly eternal domain. Since we are so earthbound, it is not unusual to seek in this present age an inheritance that will give us some type of security for the future and hope as to the unstable world around us. The truth of the matter is there is no real hope in this present world, no lasting security in the fleshly life in which we now live, nor is there any stability that can be found in the ever-changing events that are taking place around us.

As Christians, we know that God is our eternal Rock. He cannot be moved regardless of events, nor can the hope He offers be taken away from those who cling to Him. He is immovable and immutable. All that is associated to Him is trustworthy. He alone represents our real inheritance. However, much of this inheritance will not be realized in this present lifetime, but in the next world that is yet to come. Meanwhile, Christians must remember where their real hope must rest and understand the inheritance they should be seeking after to possess.

This brings us to the other aspect of inheritance. It must not only be secured by those who go before the recipients of such inheritances, but sometimes it must be restored by those who are in the position to do so. The one enemy of inheritance is the slavery brought on by unforeseeable debt. Such debt causes people to have to sell their inheritance in order to survive. In such debt individuals either become enslaved or sojourners and wanderers among strangers in a land where they have no identification or hope of future inheritance. Such individuals often become lost in that which holds no real meaning or purpose.

We see this in the case of Lot. The land could not hold the herds of both Abraham and Lot. Lot chose the lush valleys of Sodom and Gomorrah. Most of us know the story of what happened. However, my question is why did someone who owned herds and was a tent dweller end up in a city without any visible assets? Somehow, Lot lost what he had when he separated from Abraham. Clearly, his status changed when he ceased to be a tenet of the land and herdsman and became a city dweller. First, he, along with his possessions, were taken by a wicked king. It was Abraham who delivered Lot from the king and restored all of his possessions. Perhaps Lot chose the protection of the city, but in the end, he lost almost everything he had in Sodom including his wife. Although his descendants did receive an inheritance, Lot ultimately became a stranger in a land that appeared to hold no real personal inheritance for him (*Exodus 13-14; 19*).

Clearly, this has been true for every believer before they possessed the essence of their real hope and inheritance. Sin clearly took each of us captive in our former, fallen state. We became lost to all that once belonged to us. We became wanderers in a world that held us in captivity to its ways and practices. We had no real hope ever to possess a valuable inheritance marked with the qualities of eternity.

God provided a way in which His people's inheritance could be restored. We get an insight into His provision in regard to His Law. The purpose of such redemption was to ensure the integrity of heritage and future inheritance for His people. It was vital to the people of Israel that they keep the inheritance in the family in order to maintain a heritage that could be passed down from generation to generation. As believers, we must also recognize that much of the heritage that was to be preserved had to do with the Messiah.

God's Law provided a couple of ways in which to redeem both heritage and land back to its original owners. The laws governing redemption give us some important insight into the character of God as well as the importance of being able to restore inheritance. In *Leviticus 25* God provided the year of Jubilee where every enslaved or indebted Jew would be restored to his original inheritance. Jubilee occurred every 50th year after counting seven sabbatical years. It was a time of complete restitution for the descendents of Israel.

We are told in Luke 4:19 that Jesus came to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. According to Matthew Henry's commentary, the term the "acceptable year of the Lord" alluded to the year of release or of jubilee when the servants were to be set free from all debts in order to be restored to their original inheritance. We know that Jesus accomplished this on the cross.

God also provided the Law of the kinsman in *Leviticus 25*. If a brother had to sell his property because of debt, a kinsman could redeem it to keep it until the brother could buy it back interest free or until the year of jubilee. If a brother sold his services due to poverty, he was not to be treated as a slave, but a hired servant until he could secure his own release or until the year of jubilee, regardless of whether it was ten years off or a year away. Every point of redemption was calculated up to the year of jubilee.

In *Nehemiah 5*, we see where the Jews were not recognizing their responsibility towards each other. They were not only unfairly enslaving their brethren, but they were charging interest. Their brethren were kept hopelessly oppressed there without hope of restitution. In a sense, Nehemiah called judgment down upon those who did not possess the intent of ensuring the means God provided to restore His people to their inheritance. The example in Nehemiah shows us that people's greed will always prove to be oppressive concerning enslaving others.

In Nehemiah, we see the greed and abuse of even brethren towards one another because the love that expresses itself in obedience was clearly missing. However, there are a couple of incredible examples of redemption when it comes to that of kinsmen redeeming the inheritance for the sake of others. After all, if a person decided to become a responsible kinsman towards an oppressed brother, he risked compromising his own inheritance. This brings us to one of the first examples of the law of kinsman being put into practice in the Old Testament.

It has to do with the story of Ruth. Ruth was the widowed daughter-in-law of the Jewess, Naomi. She was a Moabite, and her point of identification was that of idolatry and paganism. However, her marriage to Naomi's son identified her to the Jewish nation. After all, before the Jews had become a distinct people, they had come out of paganism. Their identification to Jehovah God is what made them a special people.

To appreciate what happened, we must understand what it cost Naomi and Ruth concerning their earthly inheritance. For Naomi, the famine of Israel cost her any future inheritance for it was sold or fell into the hands of others, while the harshness of a foreign life cost the life of her husband and sons. In the end, Naomi had no inheritance, nor did she have the means to regain her original inheritance.

Ruth was eventually brought to a personal crossroad in her life in regard to an earthly inheritance. She could return to her family and be received back and taken care of until she remarried again. It all seemed so logical for Ruth to veer away from the unknown and settle for what her culture would provide for her until she could take her place as a married woman in society.

Since Ruth wanted to know the God of Israel, she chose the unlikely way, and followed Naomi back to Bethlehem. However, Naomi had no real claims on her husband's inheritance. It had been sold in a time of famine. She had no way of it ever being restored back to her because there was no seed to carry on the lineage. She needed to have someone redeem

back her husband's legacy with the intent of raising up a son in a union with Ruth who would ensure the inheritance of Naomi's dead husband and sons. What Hebrew man would become involved with a pagan, and risk his inheritance for his future generations?

God had a plan. He would raise up seed on behalf of Naomi's husband and sons by having a particular man in place. This honorable man would be willing to serve as the redeeming kinsman. His name was Boaz.

Boaz would point to the second greatest example of a kinsman taking responsibility to redeem His brethren back: That of Jesus Christ. Like Boaz, Jesus would agree to become responsible for our well-being and future. He came from the glories of heaven to take on human form in order to serve as a kinsman to you and me. He would clearly redeem people by dying on a cross. In His work on the cross, Jesus would provide a way to raise up seed to eternal life. This seed would have an eternal inheritance restored and made available to those who possessed this new life.

However, in order to cause Boaz to consider himself in such a position, Ruth had to obey Naomi's instructions. If Boaz failed to be an honorable man, Naomi's instructions could have cost Ruth her reputation, as well as a future in Israel. Ruth had to lay at the feet of Boaz in humble submission to show him her willingness to be a vessel that was putting her reputation and life in his hands to ensure a heritage for a widowed woman.

Boaz proved to be an honorable man who was willing to compromise his inheritance to preserve a lineage of a man whose inheritance would have become extinct. We know that the heritage that Boaz and Ruth preserved was that of the Messiah. King David would come forth out of their union. In addition, instead of remaining pagan and unknown, Ruth's story is recorded in the Bible, and she is named along with four other women in the lineage of Jesus that are recorded in *Matthew 1*.

As believers, we must believe and obey Scripture as to what it will mean for us to secure a future inheritance. We must risk the old life and choose to embark on a new life to know, love and serve the true God of heaven. We must then come to the feet of Jesus, at the point of the cross, seeking His redemption. In humility we must humble ourselves in sincere faith to receive a new life, and in submission we must trust Jesus to be a kinsman that is honorable and worthy in securing our inheritance. If we seek such refuge at the feet of Jesus, we will be named in His book of life that will clearly identify us to not only a new existence, but a new lineage that places us in the family of God and a new inheritance that will afford each of us eternal benefits.

The question is have you received Jesus as the kinsman that would secure such a future for you? Have you chosen to follow the true God of heaven into a new life? Have you placed yourself at the foot of His cross in sincere humility, faith and obedience? Keep in mind, probably only Boaz, Ruth and Naomi knew of her actions until it was recorded in Scripture to preserve the integrity of her reputation, and only God and you will know if you have truly taken such a journey to discover your eternal Kinsman.

6

DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY

In this series on redemption, we have learned what it truly cost for each of us to enjoy its benefits. It cost God His only begotten Son, and it cost Jesus His former glory in the heavens and His physical life as the Son of man. He actually allowed Himself to be made lower than His created angels to pay the price of redemption in order to ensure legal restitution concerning God's holy Law and to restore us back into a relationship with our Creator.

This brings us to the big challenge of redemption, which entails taking advantage of it. Redemption affords us many different benefits. It identifies us to a spiritual inheritance and it provides the necessary avenues to discover and experience God's many blessings and promises. However, to benefit from blessings and promises, we must walk through the necessary entrances that He has provided. The problem is we may not recognize such doors because of our spiritual state. We can ask God to deliver us, seek the opportunity to be set free, and knock on doors to enter in to partake of His many blessings and discover the fruition of His promises. However, if we do not by faith walk through the necessary entrances He opens for us, we can easily miss such opportunities to do so. Like the door to Noah's ark, it may be the one door open to us for a short time or season.

As I have discovered in the past, it is easy talk or sing about redemption, but sadly, there are those who continue to remain in bondage. Redemption is about restitution and restoration of what was lost because of the spiritual bondage and captivity that ensued due to Adam's rebellion in the Garden of Eden. Man was not only brought into captivity of sin, but he faced the consequences of spiritual death. In his lost state, man was without hope of changing his status without intervention from something outside of the realm of what was, and is now considered the unacceptable and inept present state of mankind.

Sadly, there are many people looking for relief from the overwhelming weight of the heavy chains of sin that often binds them, but not deliverance from the fleshly dictates or ways of sin that entangles them. As a result, these individuals might cry out in desperation against the chains, but rage against that which would challenge them in regard to their fleshly ways of thinking and being. Obviously, you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot cause that horse to drink.

Case in point: In *John 7:37*, Jesus invites all who will hear, to come freely to the wells of salvation to drink of the Living Water of the Holy Spirit. The invitation has echoed from generation to generation, but how many have truly accepted it? Many walk around dying of thirst, while some recognize that they are succumbing to spiritual drought and malnutrition even though they still strive to enter into the matters of God in other ways except through the one way provided by Jesus. The narrow gate established by His death on the cross represents the main entrance. The only accessible door comes by way of revelation as to who He is and the life He offers, and the only correct veil was clearly established by His redemption that brought forth an everlasting covenant and was a product of sanctification (*Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 13:24; John 10:7-10; Hebrews 10:19-24*). Each entrance points to an aspect of Jesus' work, character and life.

This brings us to the haunting reality that God may have secured our ransom, but you cannot force someone to receive properly the freedom and restitution offered. We can see this in our own society. In this nation, people have been afforded the opportunity to take responsibility for the quality of their life. They have had the freedom to work for goals that were

obtainable and possible. Instead of settling for small pinnacles of success, they were given the means to experience the mountains while reaching for the stars.

However, there are those in our society who advocate free bread in exchange for personal liberties. The individuals who prefer temporary bread to that which has quality and is lasting are being offered a lifestyle that costs nothing; therefore, it is not to be valued or regarded as being important or significant. As these people learn to value nothing, they become irresponsible in every matter. Instead of learning respect, they become lawless. Instead of developing initiative and character, they become treacherous, always quick to sell their soul and sacrifice others for selfish desires.

Sadly, each generation has been conditioned through the years to somehow give up their personal liberties to partake of the things of the world. They are blinded by their own limited point of view to the line that is being drawn in the sand of our present age. They have no real understanding of the liberty that has been afforded them through sacrifice. In fact, some rage against, as well as mock, the very principles that were put into place to safeguard them from tasting the bitterness of utter bondage that is produced by the corruption of evil. How could they understand liberty when they themselves have chosen to become slaves to their own self-serving and wicked agendas? How could they see the light of truth since they prefer the lies of this present age? Redemption is available to them, but they do not desire its benefits because they have been conditioned to take it for granted. They do not care to be restored to what has truly been lost because they have no concept as to how lost they have become. They want this present world instead of valuing the next one to come. Such individuals have sold their souls to hold on to their foolishness that will leave them empty and in complete spiritual ruin.

Jesus' words continue to echo through the centuries, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul" (*Matthew 16:26*)? Sometimes I stand in utter fear as to my own spiritual condition. Have I given up bits and pieces of my soul to partake of the things of the world? Have I become so spiritually dull towards truth that I have no consensus as to the spiritual opportunities I might be missing concerning my spiritual inheritance? Have I become so accustomed to some worldly lifestyle that I have no awareness as to how unprepared I am to face the trying tests of my faith, as well as the possible adversity that will bring me close to the abyss of utter destruction as the present darkness consumes the world around me?

In order to discern my own spiritual condition, I have often considered what God had to do with the children of Israel to cause them to walk through the entrances of opportunities allotted to them. Let us consider the route He had to take them to cause them to enter into all that He had promised them.

Desperation: We must become very uncomfortable in our slavery before we will accept being ransomed. We have been born into our slavery and know no other life. As long as we can get by with what we are familiar with, we have a tendency to be content even in tremendous bondage. Our slavery must not only become uncomfortable, it must become tormenting and unbearable before we become desperate. This is how spiritually dull we are, until we are awakened by the torment of our slavery. Torment is what will cause such slavery to become unbearable. It is when it becomes unbearable that we will begin to cry out in desperation.

Judgment: God must bring some type of judgment for us to realize that deliverance will cost. Judgment serves, in a way, as the gate that all must enter to experience redemption. The necessary price has to be paid for each of set us to be set free from any type of enslavement. Somewhere along the line, it will require someone to make the necessary sacrifice in order to secure redemption. The best must be offered and innocence must be sacrificed in order to produce the joy that should come with the awareness that one is truly being ransomed from

bondage in order to be restored. First, there must be judgment on the old to bring the contrast of knowing there is a price that comes with such freedom.

Separation: Once judgment takes place, there must be a separation from that which has been judged in order for the new to be unveiled. For the children of Israel that separation came at the Red Sea. The Red Sea represented the door through which the children of Israel could enter to ensure the separation from the old (*1 Corinthians 10:1-2*). Once through the Red Sea, the door was forever closed for them. They could not go back to the old; therefore, they had to go forward to the new. In a sense, such a closed door represents death to the old in order to discover the new life that awaits God's people on the other side of the door of opportunity He has clearly provided (*Romans 6:3-5*).

Preparation: God allows for desperation in His people in order to bring judgment on the old as a means to separate them from it. However, separation from the old means nothing unless God's people are prepared to embrace the new. The preparation to receive the new is often wrought with difficulties. It is not enough to bring people out of a certain lifestyle, the lifestyle or way of thinking must come out of the people. You can change a person's outward appearance, but until the inward is changed, he or she remains the same. God clearly had to purge and forge the old out of His people before they would accept the opportunities afforded them as His people.

Deliverance: There are various stages of deliverance. There is always the past phase of deliverance where people are set free from that which initially enslaves their spirit. However, they must be set free from that which entangles their souls. The soul is made up of the will, intellect and emotions. God has provided the gate of redemption to set the spirit free, but He has carved out the door that would open the way through which a person's soul can be set free. Notice, one is the gate that results in deliverance, but the door opens up the way a person must walk in order for the soul to be delivered from the influence of the old. The way a person must walk entails the ways of righteousness and the work of sanctification. The way of speaks of the present tense of deliverance that is ongoing in our lives. The truth is our souls can be easily taken captive by the strong tentacles of the world.

Communion: The ways before us must constantly be cleared by the work of sanctification that is done by the Spirit of God. He is always trying to prepare us to enter through the veil to enjoy the fullness of the blessings and promises of God. The veil for God's people points to communion. Each entrance of opportunity provided by God is to bring us to the place where the fullness of the life He has provided to us through redemption can be realized and secured. However, such a full, complete life cannot be realized outside of communion with Him.

When we consider the children of Israel, we must admit that each entrance presented a short window of opportunity through which they could enter. We can also see where God was faithful to prepare them to enter through the gate and door of deliverance at the allotted time. However, the day came when they were tested concerning entering through the veil into all that God had promised them. Even though He had been faithful to prepare them each step of the way, the children of Israel still failed to enter into the life that was secured and allotted to them by redemption.

In next month's newsletter, we are going to consider why the children of Israel failed to enter through the final entrance into the Promised Land. Surely, we need to make sure that we are not unfaithful in the life that God has clearly ordained for us. We need to make sure that we are entering through each entrance of opportunity that has been provided for us. Clearly, the seasons that mark our spiritual life and journey on this earth are ending, as we know it. Instead of becoming weary and hopeless, we must become more discerning and aware of our spiritual surroundings and be ready to enter through the veil into that place of abiding communion with our precious Lord and Savior.

7 ENTER IN

In the last chapter we considered how redemption gives people opportunity to be restored to their original inheritance. For God's people, that restoration has to do with possessing His promises. Such a concept can cause confusion for the people of God. They perceive that promises are simply given to them. It is true that God freely offers His promises by providing the opportunity to possess them, the way to acquire them, and the means of obtaining them, but it is also clear that they must be possessed through patience if they are going to be personally experienced (*Hebrews 6:12*).

Clearly, God wants to bless His people, but He must bring them to a place where they can properly receive His blessings. Blessings are meant to be used as God's means to distribute His promises in such a manner that they would be beneficial to His people as a whole.

As we follow the ways of God, it is clear to see that He must prepare His people to embrace by faith what He has promised. This can be seen in the scriptural examples in the lives of the children of Israel. Before God can bring His people into the place of promise, they must be brought to a state of desperation to produce the necessary environment where judgment upon that which is unacceptable becomes obvious. This judgment ensures separation from that which is devastating to God's people. Such judgment or separation serves as a means to redeem and prepare them for what is beneficial, causing them to walk in deliverance to possess and partake of that which has been promised. It is God's desire ultimately to bring His people to a place of communion with Him. Communion points to agreement and fellowship.

For the people of Israel, God allowed an uncomfortable environment to bring them into the Promised Land as a means to distribute His blessing to them. In the Promised Land, it would afford Him the opportunity to allocate His blessings of abundance to them for their benefit. In turn, these blessing were to be used to honor Him as their God and bless others in personal ways to ensure prosperity and an ongoing inheritance for generations to come.

God had clearly prepared His people in the wilderness to enter the Promised Land. He had closed the way back to an old life of bondage and slavery when the Red Sea closed behind them. He showed them that He was their provider when He provided water and manna to sustain them. He established their spiritual life at Mount Sinai with the giving of Law and the construction of the tabernacle. He prepared them as an army with the battles that had confronted them in the wilderness. He clearly changed their status as slaves in Egypt to become a viable kingdom or nation in the land of Canaan.

Sadly, the children of Israel came up to the very door of opportunity to enter into the Promised Land, but failed to do so. What happened? Clearly, everything was in place for them to realize their inheritance. They had all the tools and means to acquire their possession as a people of Jehovah God. Instead of possessing their inheritance, they stopped dead in their tracks and declared that it was impossible to take possession of that which God had promised them.

The children of Israel serve as a special example to Christians in relationship to possessing the complete or abundant life that has been made available to us. God has provided us with everything we have need of in relationship to obtaining the life He has ordained for us and the godliness in which to maintain it (*2 Peter 1:3-4*). For instance, the one example that has received my attention the most is that you can come up to all that God

promises, but if you never enter into the life or place He has called you to, you will never possess His promises, thereby, obtaining the fullness of your inheritance that has been wrought by His redemption.

It is a sad reality to realize that a whole generation of the children of Israel never partook of the promises of abundance attached to the Promised Land because of the bad report of a few individuals. We need to take these people's example seriously and learn the lessons of why they failed in the end to take possession of what God had promised them. Let their example of failure serve as guideposts or warnings that we, as God's people, soberly take note of for our personal examination and edification.

The one aspect of the Promised Land that was made clear was that to possess its abundance, the people of Israel had to enter into it regardless of the obstacles. God was not calling His people to a place of fantasy where they would encounter some fairytale existence or some mythical land where He would wave a wand and they would suddenly be translated into a special place where all would live happily ever after. For the people to enjoy the fruits of the land they would have to possess it. The reality of it was that they were being prepared as an army and nation to enter into the land to lay claim to it as they defeated and drove out its inhabitants. God had provided all the means to possess it, but now the people had to go forth and take hold of it.

To possess something one must prove he or she is capable and worthy of receiving it. The truth of the matter is you can hand the most valuable prized possession to someone, but if it is not worth fighting for, it is not worth valuing, laying hold of and maintaining in integrity. This is how man regards what he prizes. He must first choose to value something before he will relentlessly pursue it. He must prize it before he will sacrifice what is necessary to possess it. He must experience the importance of something before he will guard it in a proper and honorable way to maintain the integrity or value of it. Obviously, the people of Israel had to understand the value of what they were about to inherit. The Promised Land had to take on importance to them for them to count the necessary cost to possess it. In turn they would become worthy of receiving the inheritance that had been designated for them, along with the means of maintaining it.

Scripture is clear that as Christians we first must enter through a narrow gate to begin to possess our inheritance (*Matthew 7:13-14*). When you consider the word "enter," it involves seeing something through to the other side. The concept of "narrow" points a process of "travailing," "struggle," and "difficulty" that would take place before one could actually enter all the way through the gate provided. Obviously, there must be some awareness of those who enter in and through such a gate that what lies on the other side is worth possessing. Jesus stated that where a person's heart is, is where his or her treasure will be. He posed the thought that if a person gains the whole world, but loses his or her soul, what has the individual truly profited? Obviously, that which is to be valued must be properly pursued, treasured and honored in order to receive the promises or inheritance that awaits the recipients.

Hence enters some potent warnings from Jesus. Our Lord warned that many would strive to enter through the gate that leads to a new, abundant life, but few would succeed in doing so (*Luke 13:24*). There was one main reason for such a failure to occur in the lives of those who found themselves striving to find this entryway. These individuals would fail to find this gate. For people to fail to find something, points to the fact that they do not know what they are looking for. They have their own ideas as to how such an entryway will look and how to enter in. But, the reality is that they will miss the gate of opportunity to enter in because they are blinded to the only gate that the Lord has provided. The gate is marked by the work of redemption wrought on a cross. It is upheld by a distinct call to deny self with the intent of becoming identified with a complete work and application of a personal cross. Such an entry

will appear unattractive, insignificant and foolish to those who have their own ideas as to how to enter into the promises of God.

Through the years, I have watched the erection of many gates. Those who have erected these gates have declared that these entrances serve as entryways into the truths of God and into the life that has been promised. Granted these gates might require some type of religious activity that will give the appearance of piety. They might lead into religious places that give the impression that the religion being presented is acceptable and successful. However, the criteria presented are based on the world's evaluation and not on the person or work of Jesus.

Scripture is clear that God provided the entryway that we each must enter in and through to experience the fullness of our inheritance. He has provided the way in which we must walk in order to possess the life that has been made available. This entrance serves as the only door we must enter by and the veil we must enter through to secure this life. On the other side of the gate are not elaborate earthly, religious kingdoms, but a narrow way that is marked by tribulation. *Acts 14:22c* gives us this exhortation as to where the narrow way leads, "...that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

The door that God has provided may seem insignificant or foolish, but it is the only door that will identify each of us to the sheepfold that has been purchased by and belongs to the Lord of lords and King of kings. Jesus referred to those who refuse to humble themselves and enter through the door provided for His sheep as thieves (*John 10:1*). Obviously, such individuals are not only imposters who refuse to accept God's provision, but they want to take possession of the life being offered on their terms. They want to come into the midst of God's people according to their way of thinking and lay claim to something that is not rightfully their possession. They want to take possession of an inheritance that holds no real value to them. They want to benefit from something that they do not prize in an honorable way. In the end, they will take what they want as they trample under foot the real treasures of heaven.

Obviously, individuals who fail to find the right gate will also fail to enter the only door made available to the Lord's sheep. Such failure means they will end up standing far away from it as they become blinded to the only veil that leads into the secret chamber of communion. They may hang around the gate of religious convictions or walk around in the shadows of religious activities, but they will miss the only door and will not be able to see clearly to walk through the veil. Fear of exposure will keep them hidden in the shadows of religion, while the pretense of religion may satisfy their conscience, but they will never know or experience the real treasure of heaven. They may be on the outside looking in, but they will never be on the inside looking up into the glorious face of Jesus. They may be running around the outskirts of communion, but they will never enter into the revelation of His glory.

The Bible is clear. There is only one entryway, one door of opportunity and one veil that leads into blessed communion. The gate is Jesus' redemption; the door is the person of Jesus, and the veil points to total identification with the ministry of Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. To ignore God's provision is to strive in vain to enter into the fullness of His redemption, to become a thief concerning His promises, and to miss the only opportunity afforded each of us to enter into the complete life that has been made available.

What about you? The Bible is clear that it is appointed unto man to die once, then judgment. Our lives are but a vapor in light of eternity. Therefore, the window of opportunity to get it right by entering into what has been provided for us is very narrow indeed. We do not have time to be flippant or debate the matter. We have been given the measure of faith to enter into an eternal inheritance during an appointed time and at an appointed place to secure the promises of God. We must see the urgency of resolving this matter, and the need to recognize the days and times in which we live so that we can identify what is being opened to

us. We must be willing and prepared to enter all the way in and through the opening or the entryway provided for us, to secure our real eternal possession.

8

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

One of the spiritual truths I was reminded of recently is that people often miss opportunities because they do not discern the times they are living in. In God's kingdom, everything is brought about during an appointed time and season. This is why many people miss windows of opportunity. They do not realize that opportunities occur at specific times when everything has been made ready. The environment is right; the circumstances are in place to bring about a certain result.

When you study the concept of "appointed times", you realize that Jesus made an entrance into this world at an appointed time. The people of Israel had been waiting for Jesus to make His entrance for hundreds of years. When He did make it, it was not according to any real attempts on their part or based on their needs, but according to an appointed time. Can you imagine what the results would have been if Jesus had not come at the appointed time? Everything in history would not be in sync. It would appear as if everything surrounding Jesus was ahead of schedule or behind schedule, but nothing would be falling into place as far as the events or happenings taking place. For example, can you imagine the angels declaring Jesus' birth at any other time than the appointed time of His birth? Can you imagine the star shining, but pointing to an empty manger? Can you see shepherds going to a manger, only to find that the child had not been born or that they missed the event because He was located in a different place?

The children of Israel were given an appointed time in which they were to enter into the Promised Land. Everything that led up to the time had to be just right for them to possess their promises. Events were in place, and as a people, they had been prepared to take their place as a nation. The time for entering in to possess the land, as well as reap the abundant harvest of it was ripe. They had come up to the very entrance of their promises, now they needed to enter in and possess them. They were so close, but in their hearts and minds, possession of the land was still far away. As a result, they failed to enter in at the appointed time. Within minutes, the door of opportunity slammed on them.

How could this have happened? Was God's redemption for naught? Was the appointed time too short or unexpected? Were the present events too unrealistic? What can we learn from the children of Israel in relationship to the time in which we live? Perhaps what stands before us in our present day is not the Promised Land, but an ark much like the one Noah prepared. Instead of a land of abundance, God may be providing an ark of safety where the door will be securely shut before judgment consumes all that is around us.

To me the urgency to recognize the time and age is clear. We are told that the age we live in will be marked by great deception, that if it were possible even the elect would be deceived. We live in a time much like Noah where perversion and wickedness have not only filled the cup of judgment, but are spilling over as evil becomes more apparent. We are also living in an age where man has clearly become the center of the world. In such a world, there is no consensus or desire for God. It will take every bit of resolve to avoid being sucked into such a world of vanity and foolishness.

As Christians, we must recognize the time, the instructions and the challenges in order to adopt an attitude of sobriety towards the time we live in and the willingness to follow the leading of God's Spirit in whatever way necessary to possess His promises. With this in mind, let us now consider what it will take to walk through doors of opportunities to possess the promises of God.

Faith: We are clearly told in Scripture that only through faith and patience can we inherit the promises of God (*Hebrews 6:12*). Faith is active and points to a walk that will count all things as dung, or insignificant, in light of gaining the promises of God. It will recognize the opportunity afforded it because it has already believed that such a way has been provided; therefore, it is ready to respond in obedience once it receives the call to possess the promises or the inheritance.

We see such faith in the lives of Joshua and Caleb. They were the two spies out of the twelve that were sent into the Promised Land that were ready to possess their inheritance. To them, they did not see the obstacles before them concerning possessing their inheritance; rather, they were seeing the opportunity to go in confidence in their God finally to take possession of what they knew had been clearly designated and prepared for them. However, instead of being free to walk through the door of opportunity, these two men found themselves hitting a stone wall of unbelief. Unbelief will quickly cause small windows of opportunity to slam shut as people give way to the darkness of debate and logic as to why something is not possible in the present circumstances.

Failing to listen to reason: In spite of unbelief that plagued the ten spies, there were the two voices of reason that were trying to subdue the fear that was taking hold of those who were listening to the “so-called” voices of logic regarding the Promised Land. God desires to reason with us about our sins (*Isaiah 1:18*). All sins find their basis in unbelief. Unbelief refuses to agree with God’s evaluation about something. In essence, people simply do not believe God about a matter regardless of what already has been clearly established by His Word and examples.

The initial manifestation of unbelief is fear. Fear makes itself apparent in a couple of ways. It begins with those small doubts that rise up and state, “Did God really mean what He said?” These doubts give way to subtle accusations directed against the character or intent of God. “Can we trust God to do what He says?” “Is God big enough, caring enough and committed enough to pull the impossible off in regard to protecting, guiding and keeping us in what appears to be impossible odds, or is God setting us up to be destroyed as some big, cruel joke?” The only way to step through such fear and avoid its onslaught of false accusations is to choose to trust God regardless of the possible outcome. Like the people of faith in Hebrews 11 who did not see such promises fulfilled in their lifetime, they still chose to believe that their real inheritance was not of this world, but of the next. Since their vision was fixed on the eternal, they were not distracted or caught up by the temporary. They had truly become sojourners in this world in order to possess the inheritance of the next that they were counting as worthy of all consideration. Job committed all matters of his overwhelming circumstances to God by declaring that even though God would slay him in his present situation, he would continue to trust Him in regard to that which would ultimately prove to be eternal (*Job 13:15*).

Lacking the foresight, and forgetting about the hindsight: The Bible tells us to forget what we thought was important in our former life in order to put our focus on the life that awaits us. The Apostle Paul counted the things of this world as dung and chose to remember that which was wrought by Jesus in order to press towards that which had been promised.

The children of Israel often chose to remember the temporary, thereby, losing focus of the blessings of God that were before them. They lacked the foresight or vision of going forward because they forgot the slavery from which God had redeemed them. Since they lacked the hindsight of the uselessness and death attached to their former life, they were not disciplined enough to possess the foresight of realizing their real life was before them, not behind them. As a result, they failed to remember their present status of being in the wilderness, a place that had brought separation to the past, but offered no future that possessed promise or hope. Because they forgot where they came from, they forgot where they were, as fear clouded their vision to the life that awaited them.

This can be true for Christians. It is people's tendency to look backward, thereby, losing the necessary focus that will cause them to put the present in proper perspective. This will compel them to press through any obstacles before them as a means to possess the promises in front of them. When we, as God's people, fail to keep our foresight disciplined and our hindsight in the proper perspective, we can become lost in and to our present status. When we become lost in and to our present status, we will fail to realize that we cannot go back to that which is condemned, but we also will not enter that which promises life, hope and purpose. As we become lost to the way we must travel, the door of opportunity will become lost to us, causing us to become wanderers in a barren wilderness that will prove to be void of abundance and purpose. It is for this reason I appreciate Peter's response to Jesus when he asked if he would be like many of His other followers and turn back because of taking offense to His teachings. Peter's response showed hindsight, foresight and personal fortitude, "...Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God (John 6:68b-69).

Assumptions: The children of Israel assumed that God would afford them other chances, options or opportunities. Obviously, He had shown much leeway in the past concerning their insecure, rebellious actions. Granted, He had judged their idolatry, but their response in light of the Promised Land was not a matter of idolatry but uncertainty and confusion in regard to the obstacles in front of them. Surely, He would understand why they could easily give in to fear and debate the matter. Perhaps, they assumed that He would provide another way, or allow them to wait until they were more comfortable about confronting the present environment. We can only speculate what assumptions they were making concerning possessing their inheritance, but in such matters one can find the presence of assumptions.

It is not unusual to assume much about God, but in doing so we will ultimately put Him to a foolish test. We will make decisions and assume He will bless them. We will give way to what seems right and practical and assume His stamp of approval or blessings will naturally follow. However, such assumptions will put us at odds with God. We will find ourselves tasting the harsh bitterness of consequences as our assumptions prevent us from seeing the opportunities before us. We will assume our life and the promises of God will remain in sight as we decide to hide our fear behind indecision. However, in the end we may be allowed to see the promises of God from a distance, but we will never enter into their fullness because we missed the opportunity to inherit them according to the appointed time allotted us and the season of reaping that which had finally come to full maturity. This is why we are told that today is the day of salvation. Today is the appointed time to reap what has been made obvious and necessary by the present season that is upon us. However, if the door is closed there is no way in which we will be able to enter.

Presumptions: The final picture of missing opportunities is that of presumptions. In assumption, we assume that God will understand our logic and reasoning, but in presumption, we are presuming that if we show some type of acknowledgment that we were wrong and try to rectify it in some way, that we can reverse the consequences brought on us by unbelief and God will show us lenience. The truth of the matter is that once the door is shut, trying to open it is the same as trespassing in an area that is now off limits.

The people of Israel could not possess what had become off limits to them. They had no official claims or rights to the inheritance. In a sense they had squandered it away with their unbelief and disobedience. Clearly, they could not inherit the Promised Land without God's intervention.

God's redemption has afforded each of us a window of opportunity to possess our spiritual inheritance. The question is, how many of us are taking advantage of the different windows of opportunity to come into the place where we will realize the fullness of our inheritance?

9

IDENTITY

We have been considering redemption. It is amazing to realize how redemption is at the core of what we, as believers have in Christ. Without redemption, we would have no right or claim to a spiritual inheritance. Without redemption, we could not approach the throne of God or hope for any real future. Without redemption, we would have no purpose, no sense of belonging, and no future home awaiting us. We would remain lost to everything of importance and significance.

As I watch and observe people, especially many in the younger generation, I see that the prevailing mood seems to be that they have no real sense of purpose or meaning. They remind me of angry waves on the ocean being tossed to and fro by events and circumstances that seem insane. They have no sense of belonging or order. In some ways, they are victims of a society that has run amuck because of lawlessness, homes that have no moral fiber in which to anchor them, churches that promote social causes rather than the reality of a holy God, and a nation where leaders have gone mad with power as they strive to bring about a godless, wicked and destructive ideology and agenda that has no regard for anyone.

In some instances, our youth have been sacrificed on altars of vanity as parents have chased after the “American Dream” or the “almighty dollar” in the name of “stuff.” They have been dulled down by a godless educational system that advocates lawlessness and revolution based on socialistic and Marxist ideas. They have been indoctrinated into the lie of “collective salvation,” which is preparing them to be swept away like sheep being led to the slaughter, and they have been marked to be chewed up and spit out by those who have absolutely no regard for them.

As Jeannette pointed out in her article (September 2010) in regard to the times we are living in, no doubt we live in the last of the end days. The age of grace is winding down into a climatic event that will usher in the millennial age. The implications of the fruits that are coming forth in the present day are unnerving and despairing to say the least. However, even in the midst of the darkness there is great hope. The tribulation that is coming upon the face of the earth will not last forever. It will usher in a new season, and a new age or dispensation. There will be a time where the memory of the wicked of the world will be forever removed from those who are righteous. They will never again be vexed over sin, despair over compromise, be repulsed at immorality, and lament over the condition of the professing Church. All things will be put into order for the glory of God.

Meanwhile, what do we, as believers, need to ever keep before us to maintain our perspective and balance in these trying times? It is simple: we have been redeemed. Like Noah, an ark has been provided and like the children of Israel, a place has been promised and is being prepared for us to enter into. We have been clearly identified as belonging to our Lord by the seal of His Spirit. He has redeemed us, and we have an inheritance awaiting us, and a place of safety where we will be able to hide. However, we must be prepared to recognize when the door is open and ready to enter into such a place when the time comes. We must not be like the five foolish virgins in *Matthew 25* who waited until the last minute to be ready, only to discover they lacked the necessary oil to see them through the dark night, while waiting for the bridegroom to come and bid them join Him in the place prepared for them.

From all appearances, the dark night is upon us. Do we have the necessary measure of oil (Holy Spirit) to see us through the dark night? Yes, a price has been paid for us, but have we become true servants in our Lord’s household or are we still coming in and out as we so

please as far as our commitment and devotion? Will we know or recognize Jesus' voice as our Shepherd to ensure that we will respond when we hear His invitation to come into the place that has been prepared for us?

One of the realities of redemption that we must keep in mind is that it is a point of identity. It will identify people in various ways. This is why redemption is more than just a concept we sing about occasionally, it must be a reality in our lives. Let us now understand how redemption identifies us as a ransomed people.

Marked: Those who are redeemed have been marked as such. This mark is obvious as shown us by the example of a servant in *Deuteronomy 15*. Every seventh year Hebrews had to release any servant that was Jewish from any debt that had occurred, allowing the Hebrew to return home or back to his or her inheritance. They were not to send their brethren away empty handed. This was to help them remember that God once redeemed them from slavery in Egypt.

Occasionally, the Hebrew servant would decide that he or she would indenture her or himself to serve the owner of the house the rest of his or her life. Apparently, the servant knew that being indentured to the owner would ensure a greater quality of life. Perhaps, the owner was loving and fair, gaining the confidence and love of the servant. Such love would inspire the servant to count it a pleasure to serve in such a household. When a servant decided to indenture him or herself in such a way, the owner would take an aul, and thrust it through his or her ear unto the door as a mark that this individual had made a lifetime commitment to the household as a bond-servant.

We also can see where Abraham also marked himself and his male descendants as belonging to the promises of God with circumcision. The children of Israel marked their doorposts with the blood of an innocent lamb. Christians are marked by the presence of the Holy Spirit in and upon their lives. We know that the Holy Spirit also spiritually circumcises our hearts. Clearly, there must be some mark of identification when it comes to those who have been redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we are also left with an example of the truest form of service in *Deuteronomy 15*. Many Christians want to decide how and when they serve the Lord, but there are a few that become bond-servants, marked by endearing love that is committed to the task of serving the Lord the rest of their lives in His household.

Ownership: Why is it important to be identified in some way to redemption? Once again, redemption stipulates ownership. We know there must be some relationship in order to claim and buy back an inheritance that was somehow taken captive by debt or enslavement. We cannot claim what is not rightfully our own. In spite of the environment we live in, God has never, nor will He ever, promote the idea that those who have failed to possess, maintain and hold on to their inheritance will automatically retain it. After all, in *Matthew 7:21-23*, Jesus did not recognize everyone who perceived themselves to be His servants.

For example, Esau sold his birthright. The children of Israel failed to enter into their inheritance the first time and maintain or hold on to their inheritance through obedience to their high calling. The rich young ruler sorrowfully walked away from eternal life, and the prodigal son squandered his inheritance. We are given different examples that reveal even though Jesus Christ secured our inheritance, we have to possess it by faith, maintain it by giving way to the Spirit and keep it by clinging to the Rock of ages. Once again, we are reminded of the Apostle Paul's exhortation to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (*Philippians 2:12*).

Belonging: Many people have lost their way because they do not sense that they belong anywhere. They are looking for an anchor that will not only give them a sense of why they are here, but that they belong in the scheme of things. They perceive themselves as being like corks on the ocean of life, aimlessly driven by every wind or wave that comes their way.

As Christians, we have been told we have been bought with a price and that we do not belong to ourselves (*1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:19-24*). As His redeemed people, we have great assurance as to our identity. Since Jesus owns us, we are anchored to a Rock that will not be moved by the waves and winds of this world. For this reason, the Apostle Paul made this statement in *Ephesians 4:14*, “*That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*”

We belong to a heavenly family and are citizens of an eternal kingdom. We may be strangers and pilgrims in this present world, but we have a home that is awaiting us and a kingdom that will welcome us. We may be weary with the journey, but we must not take our eyes off of the destination. We must finish our course to benefit as God’s people.

Position: Identity also stipulates position in the kingdom of heaven. Many people, including Christians, do not really understand their position. Position gives us a sense of where we fit in God’s kingdom. It will stipulate our place at His dinner table of communion and fellowship, our responsibility in regard to our calling in His Body, and our function as to how we will be part of ensuring the function and health of His Body in a world that constantly threatens its well-being.

Position also determines our vantage point. Because of His redemption, we are seated in high places with Jesus (*Ephesians 2:6*). Such a position places us above the world. We are hidden in a fortress that is not subject to the present age. We have an eternal perspective that will keep us from being consumed by the lies that are engulfing this world. Even though the battle rages on the different fronts of the world, regardless of what happens in the physical arena of our lives, we can be assured that our place in the future world to come is completely secured.

Purpose: It is from the vantage point of Jesus that we can begin to understand our real purpose for being here. Have you ever regarded the insanity around you and tried to figure out why you are here? What purpose does your life really serve in a world that hates the truth, rages against righteousness, mocks purity, encourages lawlessness, and strives to destroy any reality of God?

As believers, we know that we are commissioned to preach the Gospel and make disciples of Christ out of new converts to the faith. However, there is another aspect to the reason why we are here: to bring glory to God in a world that is designed to forever try to change His glory in the minds and hearts of people (*Romans 1:23*). We are to be the salt that revives a despairing heart, the light that leads a wandering heart and living epistles that can be seen and read by those with a seeking heart. We are here to point people to Jesus.

Potential: Redemption is about restoration. It is because of redemption that all things can be restored to us. The main reason Jesus came is so we can be restored back into a relationship with God. It is by being restored that we can reach our potential of once again reflecting His glory in this lost world. This is the reason man was created. He was created with the ability to reflect the very image of God to creation. Sin clearly robbed, tarnished and effectively shrouded such an image. However, the Holy Spirit knows how to restore such an image in a person who has a humble, contrite spirit.

This brings us to the end of this series on redemption. Even though I have taken nine newsletters to explain the wonder of this incredible work of God, be assured I have only touched the surface. There is no way that I could even begin to give this subject the justice it deserves. However, my prayer and hope is that instead of the members of Jesus’ Body simply singing, “Let the redeemed say so,” that they will be able to say in their hearts, “Let the redeemed know so.” We need to know that we have indeed been redeemed, ransomed back from the throws of captivity and certain death by a loving God. This loving God was willing to pay the incredible price of His Son to restore us back to what had become completely lost to each of us. Let us praise His holy Name!