

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
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The God of Redemption

Isaiah 41:8-14

41:8 But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend;

41:9 you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off";

41:10 fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

41:11 Behold, all who are incensed against you shall be put to shame and confounded; those who strive against you shall be as nothing and shall perish.

41:12 You shall seek those who contend with you, but you shall not find them; those who war against you shall be as nothing at all.

41:13 For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you."

41:14 Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I am the one who helps you, declares the LORD; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

1. Christ, the God of Redemption

“Redemption,” it means that people would be released from the bondage of sin and become free. God saved the Israelites from slavery of Egypt. This was a prototype that all people would be released from sins through Jesus Christ.

“Redemption” also means that sins are forgiven and cleansed. God

commanded the Israelites who were saved from Egypt to build the temple, offer the sacrifice of animal, and worship him. People can not come closer to the holy God if their sins are not forgiven and cleansed. The animal sacrifice in the Old Testament was also a prototype of Jesus Christ who shed his blood for our sins. And, the sacrifice for sins was fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

“Redemption” means that people who have left God, can come back to God and be owned by God. “Redemption” could be said “atonement”. As you can see, the word “atonement” could be divided into “at” + “one” + “ment.” This means “to become one”. What would be one? God and human beings. Holy God and sinful human beings become one. That is not easy. It's even impossible. However, God paid a huge sacrifice in order to make it possible. That is “redemption” of Jesus Christ.

A variety of events in the Old Testament pointed to the redemption of Jesus Christ on the cross. Exodus of the Israelites, detailed sacrificial code in Leviticus, and Babylonian exile which happened later; these pointed to the redemption of Jesus Christ. An Old Testament scholar said, “History of several thousands year written in the Old Testament points to the one day, which Jesus Christ died on the cross”. I think it is very true.

Today's verses prophesy that the people of Judah exiled to Babylon returned from the exile. In the Bible, returning from Babylon was written as the reappearance of Exodus. The Israelites used be the people of God. However, they stayed away from the grace of redemption and became slaves of other county again. If those who were redeemed separated from the grace of redemption, can can they

come back to God again? God never abandoned people who seek for God. The Israelites who were slaves from Egypt were saved by God. God would release them from the captivity of Babylon, and bring them to their country. God is “the God of Redemption” all the time and save people who seek for his help. In Isaiah 41:14, God says, “Do not be afraid, for I myself will help you. I am, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”

This word is the hope for people who are currently suffering. It is the comfort for those who notice the sins of themselves, seek for the forgiveness and sanctification. From the Old Testament era, God has always revealed himself as “the Redeemer”. The people looked at him as their redeemer in their suffering. Job said this in his big suffering, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.” (Job 19:25) Job believed that God, the redeemer exists not too far from him. God was closer to him and would help him for sure. As Job said, Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer came down from the heaven and stood up on the earth. Holy Son of God became a human being like us, and came closer to us in order to redeem us.

2. Christ, Our Kinsman

God is our Redeemer; and He is always close to us. In Hebrew, “redeemer” has the double meaning of “kinsman” in close relations. If you lost your core family, you may rely on them; likewise, in Israel, there was an obligation to help your closest relations in case of situation.

You must be very familiar with the story of Ruth. Her mother-in-law, Naomi stayed in Moab for ten years, and she lost her husband

and two sons while her staying. Then she turned back in Bethlehem with Moabite Ruth, the wife of one of Naomi's son. However, Naomi's husband, Elimelech's properties were already given to others in Bethlehem and no way to survive for Ruth and Naomi. At the same time, Boaz, the kinsman of Elimelech was very affectionate to Ruth, so Naomi asked Boaz to accept the obligation to redeem Elimelech's properties and lineage. Consequently, He did what Naomi asked and Ruth married Boaz.

This story is not only the unexpected success story of less-fortunate foreign lady; but also it describes Jesus Christ's Redemption through Boaz. In Ruth 4:14, it says, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel!" In Japanese Bible, this "redeemer" is translated in "kinsman." God prepared the one who redeems Ruth, and as same as this case, God prepared Jesus the Redeemer very close to us, as our "kinsman."

Ruth was Moabite woman, and gentile lady; in original principles she couldn't be one of the people of Israel. However, Boaz redeemed and married her, Ruth became one of the God's people. Moreover, her child Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse was the father of David. Ruth was the grand-grandmother of King David after all; and David was the father of Jesus Christ. Finally, Jesus having the ancestor from Moab was called "gentile" and redeem us to be close to God and make us God's children.

By the way, Boaz was more than a relationship for Ruth; he was her husband; in the Bible, Jesus and Churches are Groom and Bride. God makes the redeemed people "the bride of Jesus Christ."

Boaz redeemed the properties of Elimelech because he was

responsible for the obligation of kinsman. Yet he needs some other reasons to marry Ruth more than obligation and responsibilities. Needless to say, he redeemed Ruth because he loved her, and as well as Boaz, Jesus achieved the redemption on the cross for He loved us.

How graceful it is, that Jesus is our redeemer and kinsman. We don't need to go overseas or mountains to gain salvation and help; the one who redeem us is the closest place as our kinsman. And, according to Isaiah 41:10-14, He talk to us, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God.... Fear not, I am the one who helps you.... Fear not, I am the one who helps you.... your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel." God talks us "Fear not" again and again, so why not we call for this redeemer and stay with our kinsman with love?

(Prayer)

Dear Father, You gave us your Son, as our kinsman. Help us to trust in Lord Jesus who always talk us, "I an your Redeemer." We pray this in the name of Lord Jesus.