

## What Does It Mean To Be "Redeemed"?

What does it mean to be "redeemed? We Christians often speak of Christ as our Redeemer, but what does it mean to be redeemed? It's a great question, because sometimes "church words" seem strange or unfamiliar, but this word is one that we still use today, one that Christians need to understand, because we redeem coupons, gift cards and such. I remember my mom redeeming S&H Green Stamps. How does that fit into the Biblical meaning of the word "redeemed"? Is it consistent with the Bible's meaning?

To "redeem" means to get possession of something in exchange for a payment. So, if you have a coupon, you receive the discount in exchange for the printed piece of paper. You may have heard of "Groupon", the online promotion company. Groupon sends out the deal of the day. You can purchase the deal of the day coupon. Then you go to redeem it by going to the store or restaurant or exchanging that coupon for the discount. Getting back to the question, however, how does that relate to the use of the word in the Bible?

The Bible says, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed, but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19 NIV). Instead of talking about coupons and products, the Bible talks about Jesus' blood and our lives. We were trapped in sin and headed to eternal death. But God reclaimed possession of us ... bought us back from the slavery of our sin by paying for us with the blood of Jesus. He purchased us from death so that we could be in His possession and live eternally. We've been redeemed. In a sense, you could say that Jesus' blood was the "coupon" that gives us the blessings of forgiveness and eternal life. Exchanging His life for us was a serious and tremendous sacrifice. The word "redemption" becomes one of amazing meaning and gravity in the context of Jesus' sacrifice.

I mentioned earlier about the time when folks collected S&H Green Stamps. I remember as a kid, helping my Mom paste those stamps into the books and she could exchange them, then, for a toaster or something. That's exactly how redemption works. For OUR redemption, however, it took a lot more effort than just buying a Groupon or getting a Groupon. When you bought gas at a gas station or at certain stores, they would give you some of these stamps. And then you would save them, you would fill little books full of them. Once you got to a certain amount of stamps, then you could redeem them for cool prizes like a 13-inch black-and-white TV set, or a picnic basket, or a lawn chair. If you wanted a big item, you could even add money to the stamps to purchase the product.

Where the redemption comparison, though, breaks down is that God sent His only Son into the world to die in our place as an exchange for sinners! We weren't cool prizes or nice items for God's house. We were sinners--rebellious and broken people. God didn't get any discount on us. He paid the whole bill because He loved us enough to redeem us; 100%. All of this illustrates why God's love is the most amazing love this world could ever know, even though it doesn't make sense to us sometimes. That's why the Biblical word "redeem" is so powerful and moving.

There is an account in the Biblical book of Ruth where a man named Boaz serves as a "redeemer" for Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi. These women were helpless and in great need when Boaz stepped in to care for them, provide for them, help them. In fact, Boaz and Ruth fell in love, got married, and had a baby who would become King David's grandfather. So, this legacy of being what was called a "kinsmen-redeemer" pointed to the coming Savior, Jesus Christ. The Old Testament book of Ruth is only four brief chapters long; so you all could very easily read that and get the whole story. By reading that book of Ruth, you will see that the concept of a redeemer was well known in the Old Testament. There's even a famous verse in the book of Job that says, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth" (Job 19:25 ESV). Even in suffering Job had faith that God would rescue him and pay the price to get him back from his suffering and pain--even if he had to wait until he reached heaven. That passage also inspired the much-loved hymn, "I Know that My Redeemer Lives."

The message of the Redeemer in the Bible has given comfort and hope to people throughout the centuries. Perhaps as you use coupons in your daily lives, recall the price God paid for us and the love He showed us by redeeming us

That's the View from Here

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