

02.04.06 Coromandel Baptist 10:00 a.m.

A New Exodus

Bible Readings = Colossians 2:6-23; Galatians 4:8-20

Introduction:

- (1) Last week we saw that our inheritance in Christ is secure because it comes to us on the basis of promise.
- (2) The gift of the Spirit, by whom we cry 'Abba, Father', is received not according to works of the law, but by faith.
- (3) The reception of the Spirit is the end point, or goal, of the process of redemption; since it is in and through him that we are brought into communion with the Father, in the Son. God Himself secures the inheritance for which we have been destined, on the basis of his promises.

This week's passage (Gal. 4:8-20) follows on directly: we have been delivered by the promises of God in a new exodus brought about by his own grace. Paul's personal appeal reflects the deep love that he has for his Galatian converts and the deep pain that he feels since they may now be looking to 'go back to Egypt'.

1. The Nature of the Old Testament Exodus

(1) Paul has made much of the theme of promise in the preceding chapter, especially as seen in the promises made to Abraham.

- Embedded in the promises to Abraham is the promise of a future deliverance of his captive children (Gen. 15:12-16)
- It is not just that there is a promise, but the context in which this is given is the Lord's guarantee that he would fulfil the promise.

(2) The wider context bears some examination at this point

- In Gen. 14 Abraham has been met by Melchizedek, the king-priest of Salem. He has blessed Abraham in the name of the Lord, the 'possessor of heaven and earth'.
 - Preceding this was an event in which Abraham's nephew had ended up in captivity: the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah (as well as three others: Admah; Zeboiim; Zoar) had been defeated by four other kings headed up by Chedorlaomer, king of Elam (for 'king' read 'local war lord').
 - The meeting took place as Abraham was on the way back from his victory over Chedorlaomer, and Abraham recognises the greatness of the king-priest, Melchizedek by paying him tithes (a point that the writer to the Hebrews later takes up in Heb. 7).
 - In addition, he had refused any riches from the king of Sodom on his way from the defeat of the local war lords who had taken Lot captive, so that he would not be indebted to them in any way (Gen. 14:23...did he make this oath while he was paying his tithes to God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, through Melchizedek??)

No doubt Abraham was also very well aware of the nature of Sodom (Gen. 13:13 cf. 18:20). Indeed, most of these five places become symbols of God's wrath on human wickedness (e.g. Deut. 29:23 cf. Hos. 11:8)

He could accept great wealth, and find a settlement in the land, but the manner of it would be in accord with the promises of God, and it would 'tie him in' to the world systems and their idolatry.

- So in Gen. 15, in the vision in which God came to Abraham, his first words are 'do not fear'...and promises that he will be his 'shield' and 'reward'.
- But all is dependent upon an heir! So from whence will this heir come? By a 'legal' route i.e. through the closest relative, in this case Eliezer of Damascus?
 - No, the promises would indeed come from one born of Abraham's own loins Gen. 15:4), by divine gift, according to the promise.
 - The 'cutting of the covenant' ceremony is fulfilled by God, as Abraham is put to sleep, and God himself passes through the pieces of the cut animals Cf. Jer. 34:18 where it seems a high handed, self-motivated (by the enemy at the gate!) covenant renewal ceremony has taken place, along the same lines, but with human beings as the enactors!
- So the whole event indicates not simply that there is a promise, but that the whole picture would be fulfilled by means of the promise: God being faithful to his word, rending himself to keep the covenant secure.
- The event alluded to in the Gen. 15 passage, is the event of bringing the Israelites out of Egypt and into the land, which was also part of the promise, and (like the fulfilment of the promise of an heir) it would be brought about solely by the mercy and grace of God.

(3) The exodus was not just a delivery from the physical slavery and hardship suffered by God's people, but even more it was a spiritual release

- See, for example, Ex. 12:12 cf. Numb. 33:4
- It was the God of Heaven and Earth overthrowing the power of the god of this world (Pharaoh)
- But the final deliverance was by means of a sacrifice: the Passover lamb
 - This is all a pre-figuring of the coming of *the* Lamb of God; see John 12:30-31 cf. 13:1ff; 14:30f.; 16:11; 1 Cor. 5:7.

(4) Moreover, it was God's personal action that brought Israel out from Egypt. Though he sent Moses and Aaron, it was he himself who brought them out.

- Thus see Deut. 4:37 'because he loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them and brought you out of Egypt with *his own presence*, (*paniyim* = 'face') by his great power';
 - Jesus is Immanuel "God with us"...so if we have seen him, we have seen God (John 14:9)

(5) But God's personal action was that they would *know* him and be brought into his presence.

- Ex. 19:4 "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you up on eagle's wings and brought you to **myself**." 'Israel is my Son, my Firstborn, let Israel go that he may serve/worship me' Ex. 4:22f., and thus the Lord brought them to *himself* at Horeb i.e. Mt. Sinai (e.g. Deut. 4:10)
- And his presence went with them in Tabernacle and Temple.

2. The Galatians' Exodus

(1) The reference in Gal. 4:8f. to the gods to which they were held in slavery, connotes the slavery of God's people in Egypt.

- We have seen the repeated emphasis on the enslavement of the Law earlier in the letter (e.g. Gal. 3:22, 23, 24; 4:1, 3, 7 etc. cf. 5:1).
- Later we see that Paul develops his argument in terms of coming to the mountain (the allegory of 4:21-31), and the difference between coming to Sinai (where the Law meets our sinful flesh to enslave us) and the Jerusalem above: which is free!
 - Cf. the similar use of the 'mountains' in Heb. 12:18-24.
- We also see the repetition of the concept of 'redemption' e.g. Gal. 3:13; 5:5, 7), which is the language of exodus (i.e. 'deliverance')
- And this through the personal action of God in the Son (Gal. 1:3ff.; 4:4 etc.).
 - New exodus language appears elsewhere (e.g. Luke 9:31)

(2) The Son's action of redeeming us is no less than God the Father bringing us to himself

- Cf. Gal. 4:5ff.
- This is by union with the Son, in whom we dwell in God the Father (e.g. 1 Thess. 1:1)
- And all according to Promise!

(3) The bulk of the section before us refers to the shared experience of Paul and the Galatians (4:12-20), and this serves to underline his statement in verse 11.

- See parallels here between the Galatians and Israel in the wilderness wanderings, longing for Egypt
- Also see parallels with Moses: interceding for them in love!
- Note in passing the manner of the Galatians' troublemakers' 'ministry': exclusivity so that envy is produced!
 - Gal. 4:17ff
 - Cf. Paul's ministry to them in Gal. 4:21ff.
- Law-way robs God's people of their joy and blessing (Gal. 4:15)