

Life of Christ

A study of the life and teachings of Jesus

By the Finger of God

Luke 11:14-23

—by Kevin Little

Jesus referred to the “finger of God” as the power by which He cast out demons. Moses used the phrase three times, all in connection to the Exodus and the redemption of God’s people. And this redemption? Jesus has purchased it for us, and God offers it as a gift. In Colossians 1:13-14, Paul declares, “[God] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

There may be no churchier word than “redemption”—well, outside of the word “pew.” When have you ever used the word “redemption” outside of a spiritual context? I barely redeem coupons. My concept of “redemption” has no connection to humans and relationships, but this word paints a picture of the hope that God has for you. God accomplished it with Israel when He rescued them out of Egypt and made them a people marked by His name for His delight; but He anchored the concept of redemption by establishing the “kinsman-redeemer.”

When an Israelite got into a mess, their nearest relative was responsible for rescuing and restoring them. This relative was called a kinsman-redeemer. In Leviticus 25:25-28, if an Israelite, through his foolishness, reached a point where he had to sell his property to a foreigner, the kinsman-redeemer purchased the land so that it could be returned in the Year of Jubilee.

Later in the Leviticus 25, we see an Israelite, again through his own mistakes, selling himself to a foreigner in desperation. In that story, the kinsman-redeemer had an obligation to go and buy back his family member—not to use him as a slave, but to restore him, first as a hired hand, and then to return him to his rightful place in the Year of Jubilee. In

addition, a kinsman-redeemer had to flex his muscle a little whenever a relative was captured by an invading army, as Abraham did in Genesis 48. The kinsman-redeemer would rescue his relative and restore him to the place of safety and honor, surrounded by family.

In all these instances, redemption involves three movements:

1. You end up in a nasty mess, whether it was by chance or your own foolish decisions.
2. Your kinsman-redeemer rescues you from your desperate situation.
3. Your kinsman-redeemer eventually restores you to your rightful place in the family, returning to you all that was meant for you.

Every time the Bible uses this phrase in relation to God, we see Him accomplish all three movements. And as Jesus used the “finger of God” to defend the source of His power, He declared the coming of movements two and three.

God, our Redeemer, takes our garbage and makes treasure out of it. I’ve seen Him do it in so many areas of my life, yet there are still areas of my life that are in a bad mess that I hide because of my pride or shame or embarrassment. But when I do this, I limit my Kinsman-Redeemer’s ability to come in, rescue me, and restore me to the place prepared for me.

The process was not always pleasant for the person restored. It often involved time and effort, but it happened still in the relational context of family. So, what hot mess in your life do you need to offer up God, our Kinsman-Redeemer, to see Him transform into treasure?

Question In what area of your life do you need to let Jesus’ life and message have a greater impact? In that area, what is the next step of obedience?

Family Chat If someone asked you, “What’s the big deal with Jesus? Why do you even go to church?” What would you say to them?

Take Action Whatever it is that God reveals to you in the questions above, go and do it. If God reveals nothing above, first check to make that you have surrendered, deciding to obey whatever He reveals. Then talk to someone in your life group and discuss the questions above with them.