

Redemption

Group Study

Introduction

Redemption is a complex idea in the Bible, covering a constellation of concepts and images that together help us better understand the way God acts on behalf of his people. God is redeeming humanity and all of creation, and learning what that means takes time and patience. Gather a group and explore redemption in the Bible by reading Scripture passages, collecting insights, and discussing key takeaways. We recommend printing this PDF to share with each participant for reference and note-taking.

Each of the seven 45-minute sessions in this study follows a similar format.

- **Step 1: Consider a key question.** This is the primary focus of the session, but the goal is not to answer the question immediately. Instead, have it in the back of your mind as your group works through the session. By the end of the session, you will likely feel more equipped to respond to this key question.
- **Step 2: Read Scripture together.** These passages will relate to the key question, and you might not see the connections right away. That's okay. Reading ancient literature can be disorienting, but reading together will help your group navigate each week's passages.

- **Step 3: Make space for asking questions.** The point of this study is not to answer your questions right away or even make clear observations right away. The goal is to give space for curiosity and reflection. Encourage people to record questions so that they can come back to them later.
- **Step 4: Collect insights from the Scripture readings.** These insights come from the BibleProject Scholarship team, and they include historical and narrative context, word definitions, literary design observations, and hyperlink summaries.
- **Step 5: Re-read the Scripture passages.** After engaging with the insights, you'll hopefully see the Scriptures from new perspectives and notice more connections.
- **Step 6: Discuss as a group.** Wrap things up with a conversation about the passages and insights, guided by a set of discussion questions provided at the end of each session. For those who want to go further, check out the related resources.

Here are the sessions in this study:

- SESSION 1: Redemption From Enslavement
- SESSION 2: Passover and the Redemption of the Firstborn
- SESSION 3: Redemption of Land and Enslaved Relatives
- SESSION 4: Redemption From Distress or Death
- SESSION 5: Redemption From Exile
- SESSION 6: Jesus-Style Redemption in the Gospels
- SESSION 7: Jesus-Style Redemption in the Letters

Share Your Feedback

We'd love to hear how you found this resource helpful or how you think it could be improved. Please email us at info@bibleproject.com.

SESSION 1

Redemption From Enslavement

God redeems the Israelites from slavery in Egypt by repossessing them back into his family and liberating them from death.

Step 1: Consider Key Question

How does Israel's exodus story shape our understanding of redemption?

Step 2: Read Scripture

Start by exploring two of the earliest mentions of redemption in the Bible.

- Exodus 6:2-8
- Deuteronomy 7:7-11



Step 3: Ask Questions

Make space for everyone to ask questions about the passages you just read.

The point is not to answer the questions but to give space for curiosity.

To the best of your ability, try to focus your questions on how these passages connect to the redemption theme. Write your questions down so you'll be able to reference them later.

Step 4: Collect Insights

Explore some key insights from these passages.

Story Context

Exodus begins with the Israelites enslaved to a brutal pharaoh in Egypt who thinks he owns them—they're human resources to use and abuse at will. After Pharaoh starts drowning the Israelites' baby boys in the Nile River, God partners with Moses to end the violence and set his people free. Both of our Scripture readings highlight key moments where this rescuing action is called "redeeming."

This story of liberation belongs to a pattern of redemption woven throughout the Bible. Whenever God is reclaiming someone or restoring them back to their family (after they've been taken or owned by another), he is redeeming them. The image of God redeeming his people from slavery in Egypt becomes foundational for understanding redemption in the rest of the Old and New Testaments.

Word Definition: *Ga'al*

In Exodus 6:6, the Hebrew verb *ga'al*, often translated as “redeem,” is used to describe God’s deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt as a restoration to his own family. God has already described Israel as his “firstborn son” (Exod. 4:22). All of Israel belongs to him—not to Pharaoh. So over and over, God says, “Let my people go,” and he redeems Israel by repossessing them back into his family.

Word Definition: *Padah*

Decades after Israel’s escape from Egypt, Moses reflects back on that great moment of redemption, this time using the Hebrew verb *padah* (Deut. 7:8), which means “to restore something that has been lost to your possession” or “to rescue from a life-threatening situation.” God’s deliverance of the Israelites involves both a family reunion (*ga'al*) and a liberation from death to life (*padah*).



Step 5: Re-Read Scripture

- Exodus 6:2-8
- Deuteronomy 7:7-11

Step 6: Discuss as a Group

- How does what we've learned so far shed light on any of your earlier questions?
- What did you notice as we read these passages? What observations about redemption stand out to you?
- What do you think these passages suggest about God or his desires for humanity? As a community, how are we invited to respond?
- Are you seeing connections to other parts of Scripture or life in general?

Want To Go Further?

Video

[Redemption](#)

[Ga'al / Redeem](#)

Podcast

[What Does Redemption Mean in the Bible?](#)



SESSION 2

Passover and the Redemption of the Firstborn

God's redemption of Israel from slavery in Egypt culminates with the Passover, when God protects every household that follows his instructions from the final plague—the death of every firstborn son. Afterward, God tells the Israelites to redeem their firstborn sons, reclaiming them from his possession.

Step 1: Consider Key Question

Why does God instruct the Israelites to redeem their firstborn sons?

Step 2: Read Scripture

Start by exploring two key passages about the redemption of the firstborn.

- Exodus 13:11-16
- Numbers 3:44-51

Step 3: Ask Questions

Make space for everyone to ask questions about the passages you just read. The point is not to answer the questions but to give space for curiosity. To the best of your ability, try to focus your questions on how these passages connect to the redemption theme. Write your questions down so you'll be able to reference them later.

Step 4: Collect Insights

Explore some key insights from these passages.

Story Context

Since Pharaoh refuses to let the Israelites go (Exod. 5:1-9), God sends a series of increasingly severe plagues to demonstrate his power, each time giving Pharaoh a chance to relent and avoid further judgment. But Pharaoh does not relent. So God sends a final plague, the death of every firstborn son in Egypt. Pharaoh's policy of killing Israelite baby boys (Exod. 1:15-22) and his oppression of Israel—God's "firstborn son" (Exod. 4:22-23)—turns back on him.



God explains that this death plague endangers everyone, Egyptian and Israelite alike, but he also provides a way out. All who mark their doorposts with the blood of a blemish-free lamb will be protected from the plague (Exod. 11-13), an event marking the first Passover. Every year Jewish people celebrate Passover to reenact this deliverance.

The firstborn sons that God rescues also become God's possession, so God instructs families to "redeem" (Hebrew: *padah*) their firstborn sons, reclaiming them from his possession (Exod. 13:11-15). This firstborn-repossession idea returns in the story when God chooses one Israelite tribe, the Levites, to be set apart for himself in place of the firstborn sons from all tribes, calling them to priestly service in his sanctuary (Num. 3:11-13, 44-45).

Word Definition: *Pidyon, Peduyim, and Kopher*

Often in Scripture, redemption involves some kind of payment. In the Hebrew Bible, this payment is called *pidyon*, *peduyim*, or *kopher*. When God takes the Levites in exchange for Israel's firstborn sons, he says that all firstborn sons exceeding the number of Levites must pay a "redemption payment" (*peduyim*) of five shekels to the temple (Num. 3:46-47; see also Num. 18:15-16).

Note: Since Pharaoh has no right to own human beings, God offers no redemption payment when he redeems the Israelites from his oppressive grip.



Step 5: Re-Read Scripture

- Exodus 13:11-16
- Numbers 3:44-51

Step 6: Discuss as a Group

- How does what we've learned so far shed light on any of your earlier questions?
- What did you notice as we read these passages? What observations about redemption stand out to you?
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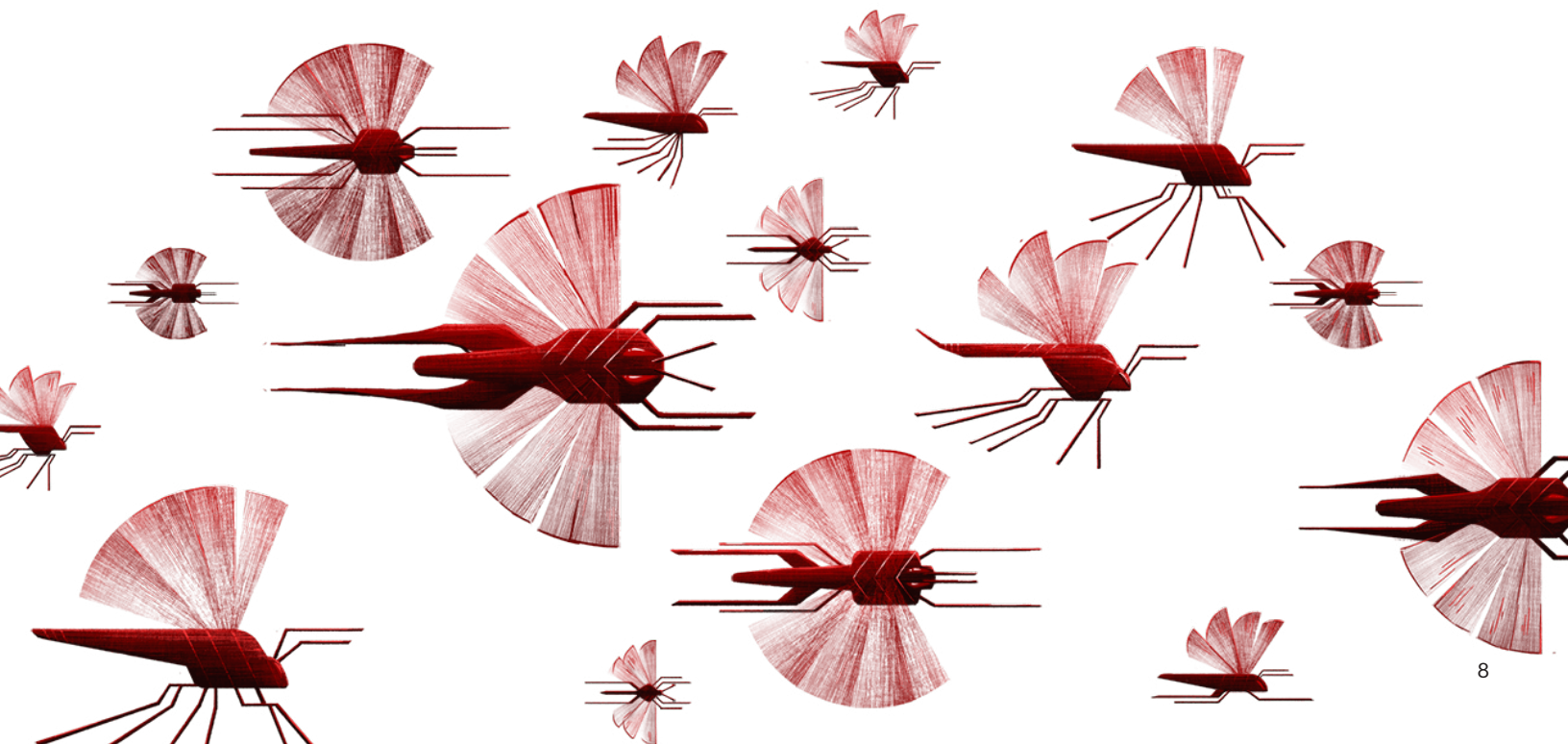
Want To Go Further?

Video

[What Is Passover?](#)

Podcast

[How Does Redemption Work
in the Passover and Jubilee?](#)



SESSION 3

Redemption of Land and Enslaved Relatives

As God redeemed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, he now instructs them to redeem one another by repossessing enslaved family members or land that has been sold outside of the family.

Step 1: Consider Key Question

What can we learn about redemption from Israel's ancient laws about property and slave ownership?

Step 2: Read Scripture

Start by exploring two key passages about the redemption of the firstborn.

- Leviticus 25:19-28
- Leviticus 25:47-55

Step 3: Ask Questions

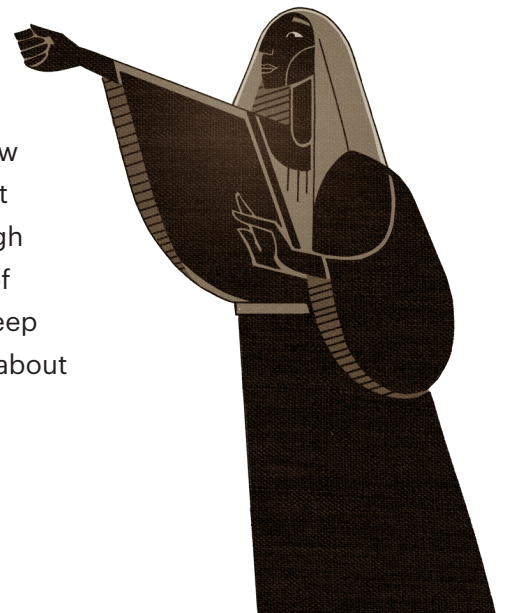
Make space for everyone to ask questions about the passages you just read. The point is not to answer the questions but to give space for curiosity. To the best of your ability, try to focus your questions on how these passages connect to the redemption theme. Write your questions down so you'll be able to reference them later.

Step 4: Collect Insights

Explore some key insights from these passages.

Story Context

After being redeemed from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites are now camped at Mount Sinai, where God makes a covenant agreement with them, promising that blessing for everyone will come through trusting and following him. The book of Leviticus records some of God's instructions for how he is calling Israel to live in order to keep that agreement, and today's reading details specific regulations about redeeming land and people.



God plans to give each tribe and family within Israel a piece of the promised land that they can hand down through the generations so that everyone will be able to plant crops and provide for their families. God explains that people can sell their land—or even sell themselves as bondslaves—if they end up in desperate situations (Lev. 25:19-28). But he also guarantees their right of redemption, an option to purchase their property or freedom back. When people cannot afford to do that, a relative, called a “kinsman redeemer,” is to make the required payment for them.

The Israelites first hearing these words from God likely had raw memories of brutalities suffered under Egyptian enslavement. God wants the Israelites’ new life with him to be nothing like their enslavement, and he wants to keep them from engaging in similar oppression toward one another. So his instructions prohibit any situation where an Israelite could be held in perpetual poverty or servitude.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern slavery laws are foreign to our modern experience. But throughout history, impoverished people from many cultures have practiced some form of debt slavery, the ability to sell oneself or a family member in order to pay debts or simply survive.

On one hand, debt slavery practices allowed desperate people to acquire essential needs for themselves and their families. On the other hand, powerful people often exploited such vulnerability for profit, locking the poor into endless servitude.

Slavery in the ancient world was common, a basic reality in social systems everywhere. But God gives Israel directives that aim at restoring freedom, limiting the possibilities for injustice, and preventing harm. The people could not hold one another as perpetual “servants” or “slaves” (Hebrew: *‘eved*) because God rescued them from bondage to Pharaoh, specifically to become his own beloved “servants” or “slaves” (*‘eved*, Lev. 25:42, 55). No longer serving a life-consuming tyrant, they can now serve the life-giving creator.

Word Definition: Go’el

For ancient Israelites following God’s law, a relative could act as a *go’el*, meaning “kinsman redeemer” or “repossessor” (from the Hebrew verb *ga’al*). This person would pay a redemption price to return either close relatives or their land back into the family’s possession. One famous example of a *go’el* in Scripture is Boaz, Naomi’s relative who buys back her land and marries her widowed daughter-in-law Ruth, redeeming the family’s inheritance and lineage (Ruth 4).

Step 5: Re-Read Scripture

- Leviticus 25:19-28
- Leviticus 25:47-55

Step 6: Discuss as a Group

- How does what we've learned so far shed light on any of your earlier questions?
- What did you notice as we read these passages? What observations about redemption stand out to you?
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- Are you seeing connections to other parts of Scripture or life in general?

Want To Go Further?

Video

[Leviticus
Ruth](#)

Podcast

[Ruth, Naomi, Boaz, and
a Cosmic Redemption](#)

Article

[Rethinking Redemption
With a Kinsman-Redeemer
in the Bible](#)



SESSION 4

Redemption From Distress or Death

The Bible sometimes uses redemption language to describe people being delivered from situations of distress or death, even without a redemption payment or the help of a relative who acts as redeemer.

Step 1: Consider Key Question

How does the idea of being rescued from certain death relate to redemption in the Bible?

Step 2: Read Scripture

Start by exploring a narrative from 1 Samuel and excerpts from two psalms.

- 1 Samuel 14:24-28, 43-45
- Psalm 49:7-9, 15
- Psalm 55:16-18

Step 3: Ask Questions

Make space for everyone to ask questions about the passages you just read. The point is not to answer the questions but to give space for curiosity. To the best of your ability, try to focus your questions on how these passages connect to the redemption theme. Write your questions down so you'll be able to reference them later.



Step 4: Collect Insights

Explore some key insights from these passages.

Story Context

Saul is anointed as Israel's first king, but he trusts his own wisdom more than God's. In the preceding narrative, Saul gets nervous about an impending battle and decides to violate God's instruction by offering a sacrifice before the prophet-priest, Samuel, arrives. Saul thinks he has a good reason—he wants to persuade God to give them victory. But Samuel chastises him for being so foolish (1 Sam. 13).

Now Saul forces his soldiers to swear an oath to fast from food for the rest of the day or until they defeat their enemies. Once again, he thinks that a ritual will convince God to help them defeat their enemies. The soldiers all swear to the oath on punishment of death, but Saul's son Jonathan misses the announcement and eats some honey. When Saul finds out, he thinks he has no choice but to kill Jonathan. In his world, oaths are binding even unto death.

But there's a twist. The whole army offers a counter-oath, persuading Saul to spare Jonathan's life. At this crucial point, the narrative uses *padah* to describe the soldiers' action. They "redeem" or "rescue" Jonathan from certain death (1 Sam. 14:45).

Note: We studied *padah* during Session 1, noting that it's one of the two key Hebrew verbs often translated as "redeem."

Literary Design

Psalm 49 emphasizes the importance of trusting in God and not fearing those who foolishly trust in wealth for life. References to *padah* ("redeem" or "rescue") frame the poem's central pivot section (Ps. 49:7, 15). Exposing the weakness of wealth, the psalm declares that no person could ever "redeem" (*padah*) another from death forever because the "redemption payment" (*kopher* in v. 7b; *pidyon* in v. 8a) for a human life is too costly. Death renders all humanity in need of both divine rescue and an infinitely valuable redemption payment, but the poet trusts that God will "redeem" (*padah*) him (Ps. 49:15; see also Ps. 55:18). He alone has the power to give and sustain all life.



Step 5: Re-Read Scripture

- 1 Samuel 14:24-28, 43-45
- Psalm 49:7-9, 15
- Psalm 55:16-18

Step 6: Discuss as a Group

- How does what we've learned so far shed light on any of your earlier questions?
- What did you notice as we read these passages? What observations about redemption stand out to you?
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- Are you seeing connections to other parts of Scripture or life in general?

Want To Go Further?

Video

[Kopher / Ransom](#)

[1 Samuel](#)

[The Book of Psalms](#)

Podcast

[Redemption From Enemies and Death Itself](#)

[Why Does Jesus Say Not to Swear Oaths?](#)



SESSION 5

Redemption From Exile

When Israel ends up in exile, God communicates through Israel's prophets to promise redemption, declaring that he will reclaim his estranged children from the oppressive power of Babylon. He will redeem them and bring them home.

Step 1: Consider Key Question

What does redemption look like for the Israelites sent into Babylonian exile?

Step 2: Read Scripture

Start by exploring three passages from the book of Isaiah.

- Isaiah 43:1-7
- Isaiah 44:21-23
- Isaiah 51:9-11



Step 3: Ask Questions

Make space for everyone to ask questions about the passages you just read. The point is not to answer the questions but to give space for curiosity. To the best of your ability, try to focus your questions on how these passages connect to the redemption theme. Write your questions down so you'll be able to reference them later.

Step 4: Collect Insights

Explore some key insights from these passages.

Literary Design

Isaiah 43:1 uses the Hebrew verb *ga'al* to describe God redeeming Israel from exile. As we noted in Session 1, the verbal action of *ga'al* focuses on repossessing people back into their original families.

Notice that the passage begins and ends by saying that God has “created” and “formed” the Israelites (Isa. 43:1, 7). In verse 6, God describes them as his “sons” and “daughters”—the Israelites belong to God’s family. And in the center of the poem, God describes his parental delight in them: “You are precious in my eyes ... and I love you” (Isa. 43:4, BibleProject Translation).

God’s delivering act of redemption involves returning human beings that he formed and created not just back to their land but also back to himself.

Historical Context

In Isaiah 43:1-3, God says that he gives Egypt as a “ransom” (Hebrew: *kopher*) when he “redeems” (*ga’al*) Israel from Babylon. This could refer back to the Egyptians who died when they resisted God’s command to free the Israelites at the exodus (Exod. 12:29-32, 14:26-29). Or it could point forward to Egypt’s defeat at the hands of Cyrus the Persian in the 6th century B.C.E. Either way, Egypt’s historic downfall symbolically represents God’s unstoppable power to oppose and ultimately end all oppressors (see Isa. 2:12-22).

Hyperlink Summary

Weaving strong exodus connections into his poetry, Isaiah helps his readers envision God’s plan to rescue Israel from Babylonian exile. Echoing the exodus from Egypt, Israel will once more pass through waters without being harmed and navigate wild deserts without being thirsty (Isa. 43:1-7, 48:20-21; see Exod. 14:1-31, 15:22-25, 17:1-7). The same God who once split the Red Sea—which Isaiah pictures as a raging sea dragon—will also make a way for his people out of life-threatening Babylonian exile (Isa. 51:9-11).



Step 5: Re-Read Scripture

- Isaiah 43:1-7
- Isaiah 44:21-23
- Isaiah 51:9-11

Step 6: Discuss as a Group

- How does what we've learned so far shed light on any of your earlier questions?
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- Are you seeing connections to other parts of Scripture or life in general?

Want To Go Further?

Video

[Isaiah 40-66](#)

Podcast

[Yahweh the Redeemer in Isaiah](#)



SESSION 6

Jesus-Style Redemption in the Gospels

The New Testament gospel writers talk about Israel's redemption happening through Jesus, who offers his life as a redemption payment that liberates people from enslavement to sin and death, bringing them into the freedom of true life.

Step 1: Consider Key Question

How do the New Testament gospels anticipate the way redemption happens through Jesus?

Step 2: Read Scripture

Start by exploring three passages from the Gospels.

- Luke 1:67-75
- Luke 2:36-38
- Mark 10:42-45



Step 3: Ask Questions

Make space for everyone to ask questions about the passages you just read. The point is not to answer the questions but to give space for curiosity. To the best of your ability, try to focus your questions on how these passages connect to the redemption theme. Write your questions down so you'll be able to reference them later.

Step 4: Collect Insights

Explore some key insights from these passages.

Word Definition: *Lutrosis* / *Lutron*

The Septuagint is an early Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible that the New Testament authors used. In it, the Greek noun *lutrosis* represents both of the Hebrew root words for redemption (*ga'al* and *padah*) that we learned about during earlier sessions. This helps us see how the New Testament authors can use *lutrosis* (see Luke 1:68, 2:38) to suggest the idea of repossessing someone back into the family (*ga'al*) or of restoring something lost or liberating a person from death (*padah*). *Lutron* is used for the Hebrew words *kopher* and *pidyon*, which refer to a "redemption payment" or "ransom" (see Mark 10:45).

Notice how in the New Testament, a particular Greek word might be drawing on multiple Hebrew words or concepts. This reality helps us respect the value of trying to understand how the original audience would have understood these words.

Story Context

Israel experiences a partial redemption from Babylonian exile when some of the people return to their land (see Ezra 1-2). But centuries later, they're still being dominated by an enemy ruler—now the Roman empire. By Jesus' day in the 1st century C.E., Israel had long been waiting for God to redeem them from their foreign overlords and set a powerful king on David's throne (see Isa. 9:1-7, 60:1-22).

An account from the opening of Luke's gospel, which takes place before Jesus had been born, connects Jesus and his story to this long-anticipated redemption. Zechariah, a priest who becomes the father of John the Baptizer, prophesies that God's "redemption" (Greek: *lutrosis*) has already begun. God has raised up a king in the line of David who will rescue his people (Luke 1:68-71). And a prophet named Anna, who has been praying and fasting in Jerusalem's temple for years, sees Jesus as a child and talks about him with everyone who is "looking forward to the redemption (*lutrosis*) of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). Anna sees Jesus as the one who will bring God's promise of redemption to fulfillment.

Hyperlink Summary

Jesus is unlike other kings, who wield coercive, violent power. Instead, Jesus is compelled by divine love to rule as a king who comes "to serve and to give his life-being as a redemption payment (*lutron*) for many" (Mark 10:45, BPT).

Here, Jesus links to Isaiah's promise of a suffering servant who will die to bear "the sin of many" (Isa. 53:12). The people's real enemies aren't Roman overlords or even religious elitists. Jesus does not battle with flesh-and-blood people but stomps out the cosmic powers of sin and death. And he redeems people from those powers so that he might restore them to freedom and life with God.



Step 5: Re-Read Scripture

- Luke 1:67-75
- Luke 2:36-38
- Mark 10:42-45

Step 6: Discuss as a Group

- How does what we've learned so far shed light on any of your earlier questions?
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Want To Go Further?

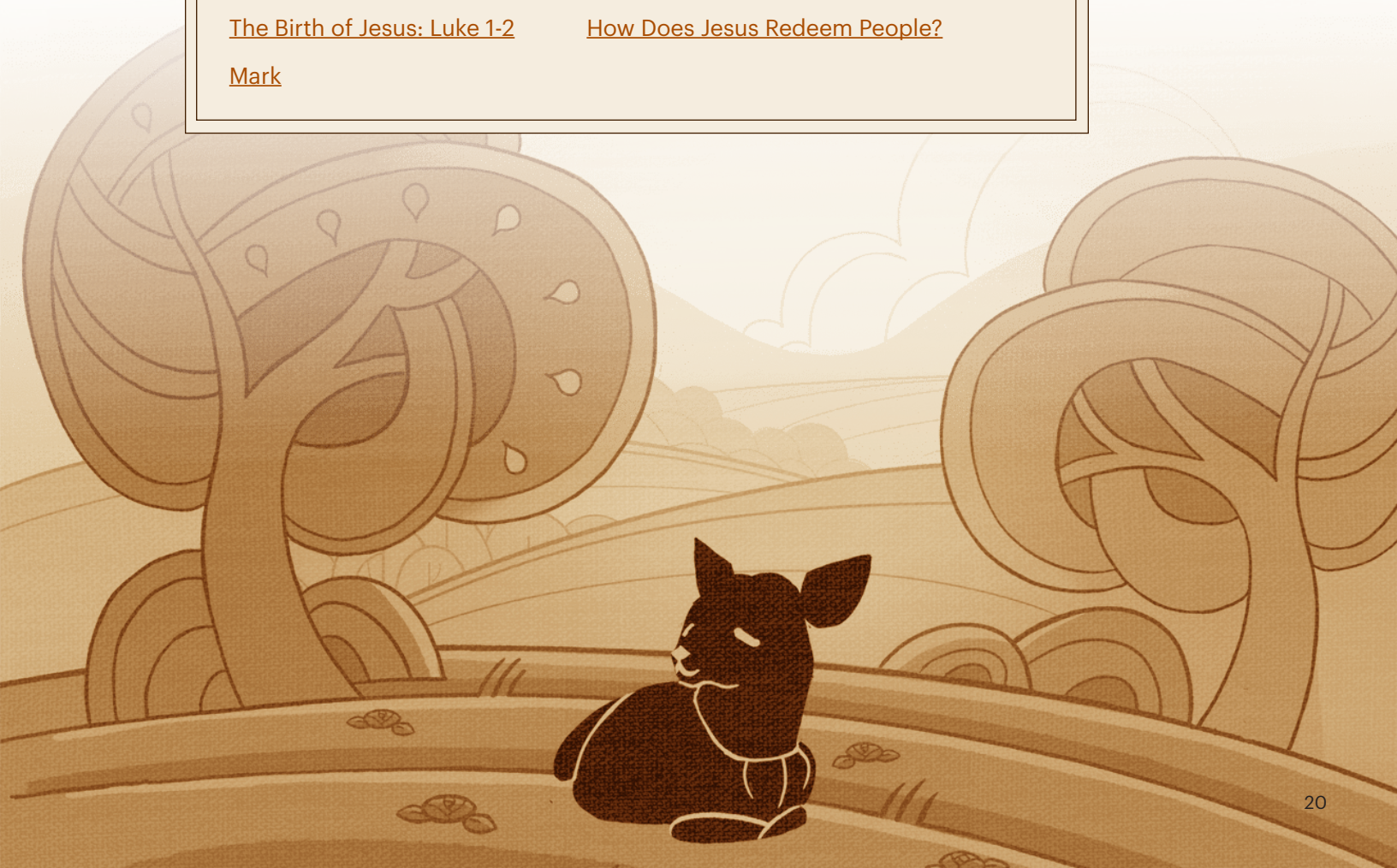
Video

[The Birth of Jesus: Luke 1-2](#)

[Mark](#)

Podcast

[How Does Jesus Redeem People?](#)



SESSION 7

Jesus-Style Redemption in the Letters

The New Testament letters portray Jesus' redemption as a transformative rescue, restoring humans to God's family and empowering us to live as his holy people in the way, truth, and life of Jesus.

Step 1: Consider Key Question

How do these passages from Romans, 1 Peter, and Hebrews help us understand Jesus' role in our redemption and the specific kind of redemption he accomplishes?

Step 2: Read Scripture

Start by exploring three passages from New Testament letters.

- Romans 3:21-24
- 1 Peter 1:13-21
- Hebrews 9:11-15

Step 3: Ask Questions

Make space for everyone to ask questions about the passages you just read. The point is not to answer the questions but to give space for curiosity. To the best of your ability, try to focus your questions on how these passages connect to the redemption theme. Write your questions down so you'll be able to reference them later.

Step 4: Collect Insights

Explore some key insights from these passages.

Story Context

In Hebrews 9:11-14, the author of Hebrews suggests that Jesus redeems people by offering his own blood as an atoning sacrifice. In the Hebrew Bible, priests used blood from sacrificed animals to cleanse the tabernacle or temple, which became defiled due to human wrongdoing. The priests regularly purified these holy spaces so that God's presence could continue dwelling among his people (see Lev. 16).



Although we may associate redemption specifically with Jesus' death (see Mark 10:45; Rom. 3:24-26), Hebrews 9 describes Jesus' resurrection and ascension as the key moment of redemption. The author saw this as the moment when Jesus cleanses the heavenly holy of holies from the contamination and defilement of all human evil.

In Romans 3:21-24, Paul talks about humanity's need for redemption from enslavement to the cosmic powers of sin and death. His "slave" language recalls Israel's former enslavement in Egypt, but the redemption Paul describes is more than rescue from human oppressors. "All people" are corrupted and enslaved, says Paul (see Rom. 3:22-23, 6:6), which includes oppressors and victims alike. From Paul's perspective, humanity's deliverance from sin parallels Israel's ancient redemption from slavery, but Jesus' redemption is next-level.

In Exodus, Pharaoh had no legitimate claim over Israel, so God worked with Moses to stop evil and reclaim his people. Similarly, death has no legitimate claim over humanity, so in Jesus, God defeats death and reclaims his people, offering a way for all humanity to move through death and into a transformed life with him (Rom. 6:3-11).

Hyperlink Summary

The 1 Peter passage hyperlinks to when Israel camped in the wilderness at Mount Sinai, after God brought them out of slavery in Egypt. There, God gave the Israelites many instructions, in which we find a famous line: "Be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 19:2). Humanity's creator is holy and has created every person in his own image; therefore, people are designed to be holy like God.

Peter reminds his readers that they were "ransomed" (or "redeemed," Greek: *lutroo*, from the same root as *lutrosis*) for a reason. Their redemption is so they will have freedom to "be holy" like God is holy, embracing the loving, generous, faithful way of God. That faithful way is seen most clearly in Jesus, who is God in the flesh.

By teaching us to love and relate rightly with God and with all our neighbors, Jesus begins the long redemption process that ultimately transforms us back into the kind of people we were made to be. From this angle, Jesus repossesses, or redeems, humanity back into life as God's children, fully returned to his family (see Rom. 8:14-17).



Step 5: Re-Read Scripture

- Romans 3:21-24
- 1 Peter 1:13-21
- Hebrews 9:11-15

Step 6: Discuss as a Group

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Want To Go Further?

Video

[Romans 1-4](#)

[1 Peter](#)

[Hebrews](#)

Podcast

[Jesus' Death as Redemption in Romans](#)

[The Power of Jesus Over Death](#)

[An Eternal Redemption](#)

