

Doctrine of the Kinsman Redeemer

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I. Introduction.

- A. This doctrine is strictly derived from the Old Testament; there is no explicit mention of it in the New Testament, although it is vital to understanding Revelation 5.
- B. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the writer informs us that the Law was a shadow of the good things to come, and this includes various institutions such as the one in view. Heb.10:1
- C. Typology has three distinct elements that differentiate it from other Old Testament teachings and these are:
 1. Correspondence—Old Testament rites and rituals do correspond in certain and very definite ways with the antitype, Jesus Christ and various aspects of His life and ministry.
 2. Historical—that is, the types are not allegorical in nature; the types of the Old Testament represent definite, real things that took place in that period of history.
 3. Predictive—they point forward to their fulfillment or antitype (that which is predicted by the type).
 4. See the **Doctrine of Typology** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).
- D. When we consider the doctrine of the kinsman redeemer, we will see that this Mosaic institution forms the basis for a critical aspect of the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- E. In fact, this very important doctrine is one of the reasons that God had to become flesh; this is certainly a very large part of the reason for the incarnation. Joh.1:1,14; Heb.2:14
- F. The primary scriptures that deal with this principle or its application are Lev.25; Num.35; Deu.19; and Ruth 4.
- G. This concept comes out of a cultural tradition of what should be done with a woman who has been widowed and she has no children. This is alluded to in Gen. 38 and known to us as a levirate marriage.
 1. From the man's point of view: a brother or close relative impregnates the woman and gives her a child, who is understood to be her deceased husband's child.
 2. From the woman's point of view: the woman is not simply impregnated and cast aside; the brother who impregnates her takes responsibility for her and the child as well. Otherwise, it is very difficult for a widower to remarry, as she is no longer a virgin.
 3. In Gen. 38, the father, Judah, becomes the replacement for his son, who died the sin unto death before impregnating his wife.

II. Vocabulary.

- A. גָּאָל (ga'al), verb, the primary meaning of this root is *to do the part of a kinsman* and thus to redeem his kin from difficulty or danger.
1. The participial form of the Qal stem of this verb has practically become a noun in its own right though it may properly be considered as a form of the verb.
 2. One difference between this root and the very similar root hd'P' (padhah—redeem) is that while both of them involve the transfer of ownership from one to another through the payment of a ransom price, our term generally emphasizes the redemption being the privilege or duty of a near relative.

III. Definition and description.

- A. Redemption is simply deliverance from some sort of bondage, a release of someone or something from an alien power that has a claim on it.
- B. The biblical idea of redemption also involves the deliverer and what he must do to effect the deliverance.
- C. What he must do, or the price he must pay, is known as the redemption price or ransom.
- D. Release from the claim must be effected by someone who, for whatever reason, has a prior or more fundamental claim toward what is to be
- E. While it was occasionally possible for someone to deliver himself, more characteristically the redeemer was someone else.
- F. In the case of the kinsman redeemer it was the nearest blood relative, who because of his position in the family possessed the right and the obligation of redemption.
- G. One that had the right as a blood relative to redeem persons or property, whether he exercised it or not, was called the redeemer (Heb. go'el).
- H. The three things that were required of the go'el was that he must be a blood relative, he must be willing to redeem, and have the means to actually redeem the person or object in question.
- I. In the case of redeeming another person, the redeemer must have the added qualification of being free himself; a slave could not redeem another
- J. In effect, the kinsman redeemer was a wealthy benefactor, a blood relative who could free the debtor by paying the required ransom price.

IV. The redemption of property. Lev.25:23-28

- A. Fundamental to the laws that governed the land was the conviction that YHWH was the true owner of all property by right of creation.
- B. One of the practical applications of this truth was that no Israelite could permanently lose his inheritance. Lev.25:23
- C. In order to protect the small landowners, Israelites were legally prohibited from making any permanent sale of their property. Lev.25:24
- D. This was designed to reinforce the truth that the land was God's and that it had been given to them as a gift under the Covenant.
- E. Three separate situations are contemplated in a temporary land sale, all of which involved selling the land due to a condition of extreme poverty.

1. The first envisages the recovery of the land through the intervention of the kinsman redeemer. Lev.25:25
 2. The second was a provision in the Law that allowed for the possibility of the land being recovered by the seller, who might find himself financially able to repurchase it at a later date. Lev.25:26
 3. The third occasion in view was when there was no go'el and no change in the financial status; this required that he wait until the Jubilee to recover the land.
- F. In the first case above, which was by far the most common, the kinsman redeemer intervenes to recover the property that has been lost and by his action the land reverts to the original owner.
- G. However, in the two examples we have of this in the Old Testament, we do not find a case in which the land is simply repurchased, but a prior right to purchase the property, which has been offered for sale. Ruth 4; Jer.32:7ff
1. In the first case, Boaz was able to redeem the property of Naomi only after a nearer redeemer waived his right; he did this simply because he realized the marriage to Ruth was tied to the purchase.
 2. In the second case, Jeremiah was only able to redeem the property before it went on the open market.
- V. The redemption of persons.
- A. In the Old Testament and in the ancient Near East, the practice of slavery was quite widespread and a regular feature of life.
- B. There were several sources of slaves and people could become slaves in a number of ways.
1. A person might be taken captive in warfare. Deu.20:10-14
 2. If a man that became insolvent and could not pay his debts, he could be sold as a slave. 2Kgs.4:1; Neh.5:5
 3. Children could be sold as slaves. Exo.21:7-11
 4. One could be sold as a slave in order to make restitution for some crime that he had committed. Exo.22:3
 5. One could voluntarily sell himself as a slave to pay his financial obligations. Lev.25:39
 6. One could be kidnapped and sold into slavery. Exo.21:16; Deu.24:7
- C. However, the Jews were instructed that no Israelite was to be permanently held in bondage since he belonged to YHWH. Lev.25:54-55
- D. If one found himself in the position of being enslaved, six years was the maximum time that one could be required to serve as a slave; however, one could choose to remain a slave for the purpose of economic security.
- E. In the event that one Israelite sold himself to another Israelite, there was no provision made for redemption. Lev.25:39-46
- F. However, if an Israelite was forced to sell himself to a resident alien, the kinsman redeemer became an available option. Lev.25:47-55
1. This option provided for an order of responsibility that must be followed in the performance of the duties of the go'el. Lev. 25:48-49; Ruth 3:12

2. The value of his work and the number of years that remained until the next Jubilee calculated the actual redemption price. Lev.25:50ff

VI. The blood avenger.

- A. The duty of the blood avenger was one of the oldest and most pressing responsibilities of the go'el in the land of Israel.
- B. This duty is referenced in several places and uses both the singular go'el (Num.35:12) and the more complex term go'el hadam (the redeemer/avenger of blood). Jos.20:3,5,9
- C. In order to understand properly the concept of blood vengeance, we must recognize that the biblical penalty for murder was capital punishment, which was instituted by God and never revoked. Gen.9:5,6
- D. God is cognizant of the innocents that suffer the ultimate crime at the hand of others, and their blood is said to be "crying from the ground". Gen.4:10
- E. This is a phrase that expresses an appeal for Divine vengeance; for this reason, the Lord Himself monitors these matters. Deu.32:35; 2Kgs.9:7;
- F. Israel was instructed to make certain that the shedding of innocent blood was always avenged, since blood polluted the land and failure to prosecute a murderer brought cursing on the nation. Num.35:33-34; Psa.106:38
- G. Innocent blood is a term that is applied to those that are killed without
- H. When the killer was not discovered, God instituted a ceremony to absolve the elders of the nearest town of guilt. Deu.21:1ff
- I. A major factor that reduced the practice of blood vengeance was the rise of the monarchy, which delegates the government the right of capital
- J. The practice of asylum at the altar and the cities of refuge limited unrestrained vengeance. Exo.21:12-14; Num.35:6,11-15,25-28;

VII. Jesus Christ is the great fulfillment of the type.

- A. It should be noted that our redemption was the subject of prophecy and the Person and work of Christ on our behalf was foreordained. 1Pet.1:18-20
- B. Jesus Christ perfectly fulfills the four things that are required for one to act as the kinsman redeemer.
- C. He became our kinsman according to the flesh through the incarnation, providing Him the necessary blood relationship with mankind. Joh.1:1,14; Rom.8:3; Phi.2:7; Heb.2:17, 4:15
- D. Therefore, He is the nearest kinsman that is free from the debt of sin that all men face (Rom.3:9; 11:32; Gal.3:22) by virtue of the virgin birth and His sinless life. Joh.8:46; Act.3:14; Heb.4:15; 7:26; 1Pet.2:22; 1Joh.3:5
- E. He was willing to pay the ransom price that was demanded in order to free those that were in bondage. Isa.53:10; Mar.10:45; Joh.1:29, 6:38; Mat.26:39ff; Tit.2:14
- F. He was able to pay the required price since He Himself was not burdened with sin or its penalty of death, and resided outside the slave market of sin. Rom.8:3; 1Cor.7:23; 2Cor.5:21; Rev.5:9
- G. Further, His work has qualified Him to execute God's Testament and restore the property rights to planet earth that our ancestor Adam forfeited, as seen in the dramatic question of Revelation 5, "Who is worthy?" Rev.11:15-17;

H. He has not only acted on our behalf to restore our freedom and the property that God created for mankind, He will act as the blood avenger during Daniel's 70th week and the Armageddon campaign. Rev.6:10; 16:6; 19:2