



RESCUED, TRANSFERRED, REDEEMED AND FORGIVEN EXPOSITION OF COLOSSIANS 1:13, 14

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“He 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.”
(Colossians 1:13, 14)

People are looking for deliverance from evil spirits and Satanic oppression. We receive more emails about the demonic than any other topic. When I point those who send the emails to conversion as the only way out of Satan’s domain, many say that they are Christians and they are still harassed. They want someone who can manipulate the spirit world to their benefit and relief. They do not know it, but they are looking for what pagans call shamans. What God offers is removal from Satan’s domain.

In this article we will describe a Biblical worldview in regard to the world of the spirits. After the Tower of Babel, God put the nations under the “sons of God” and took Israel for His own. Eventually, Israel so rebelled against Yahweh that she ended up under the powers of darkness as well. The only deliverance from the “domain of darkness” is found through Jesus Christ. Our passage describes that. We must believe what God said about this, rather than opting for deliverance counselors who are effectively shamans. Whatever Satan might do to harass us, he cannot remove us from the kingdom of Christ. We who believe the gospel are safe.

The World Under the Evil One

John emphasizes the same truth that Paul wrote about in Colossians. Only

Christians are delivered from the domain of darkness: “We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” (1John 5:19 NASB). The word for “world” is *cosmos* and here denotes the system of this world—fallen and in rebellion to God. This is true of the world without respect to geography. Though things may be objectively better or worse in various parts of the globe, there is nowhere one could travel to enter the kingdom of God and exit the domain of darkness. The change from darkness to light is relational and redemptive, not geographical. Those who think they can turn some geo-political entity into the present kingdom of God are deceived. When Paul wrote to the Colossians, they lived in a very wicked and pagan city, but they had been transferred into the kingdom of God’s Son. Those described by John as “from God” were persons redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, not residents of some christianized nation-state. God reigns over persons, both individually and gathered in His name (Matthew 18:20).

Before coming to Christ, every person was under the power of the evil one. We know this theologically, not symptomatically. One might be a happy, bright person loved by all. Another might be horribly tormented and obviously needy. One might be rich, another poor. One may belong to an abusive, perverted religion, another to outward

Christendom without having been born again. According to the Bible, all alike “lie in the power of the evil one.” Before we can understand being rescued, we have to realize the reality of being in bondage. Many are blinded by Satan and cannot see their need: “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2Corinthians 4:4 ESV).

After God scattered the peoples at the Tower of Babel, He put the 70 resultant nations under the sons of God:

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But the LORD’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.
(Deuteronomy 32:8, 9 ESV)

The “sons of God” included evil beings as shown in 1Kings 22:19-23 and Job 1:6. The nations were under the hostile powers while Israel was to be under Yahweh. These “sons of God” are also called the “host of heaven:”

And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today. (Deuteronomy 4:19, 20 NASB)

Elsewhere in the Bible, this “host of heaven” and stars are thrown to earth (Revelation 12:4), showing that they are, in such cases, not literal stars. No

literal star could ever be on the earth. These are fallen spirit beings.

By the time of the New Testament, Israel was under the host of heaven like the other nations. This was God's judgment for consistent rebellion that often included worship of the host of heaven. Stephen mentioned this in his sermon: "But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, 'It was not to Me that you offered victims and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, was it, O house of Israel?'" (Acts 7:42 NASB). Manasseh worshiped the host of heaven (2Chronicles 33:3). So when John said that the whole world was under the power of the evil one, that was literally true. God will eventually judge both the wicked rulers in the spirit realm and the rebellious kings on the earth, "So it will happen in that day, That the Lord will punish the host of heaven on high, And the kings of the earth on earth" (Isaiah 24:21 NASB).

Evil beings are often described with astral terminology, as is the case with Lucifer:

*How you are fallen from heaven,
O Day Star, son of Dawn! How
you are cut down to the ground,
you who laid the nations low! You
said in your heart, 'I will ascend to
heaven; above the stars of God I
will set my throne on high; I will sit
on the mount of assembly in the far
reaches of the north; I will ascend
above the heights of the clouds; I
will make myself like the Most
High.' But you are brought down
to Sheol, to the far reaches of the
pit. (Isaiah 14:12-15 ESV)*

So when the passage we are studying in Colossians says that we were rescued from the domain of darkness, we need to appreciate that we were in a horrible state of spiritual bondage. We were under the host of heaven—the powers of darkness that rule over what the Bible calls the "sons of disobedience:" "in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobe-

ence" (Ephesians 2:2 NASB). Again, this is not symptomatic, but relational. The issue is about whose domain we are in—Christ's or Satan's.

RESCUED

The term in Colossians 1:13 translated "rescued" is found in the Greek OT in key passages about God making Israel His people (the situation described in Deuteronomy 32:8, 9). The term is used in this important passage about God's promises given to Moses to speak to Israel:

*Say therefore to the people of
Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will
bring you out from under the bur-
dens of the Egyptians, and I will
deliver you from slavery to them,
and I will redeem you with an out-
stretched arm and with great acts
of judgment. I will take you to be
my people, and I will be your God,
and you shall know that I am the
LORD your God, who has
brought you out from under the
burdens of the Egyptians. (Exodus
6:6-7 ESV)*

The term "deliver" is *ruomai* in the LXX¹ and is the same word in Colossians 3:13. The word means more than just rescue from trouble, but it includes the idea of snatching from danger and bringing to oneself.² This is clear in the passage in Exodus and is definitely the point in Colossians. God rescues us from bondage to Satan and brings us to Himself, making us His special people.

The Exodus 6 passage became the basis for the four cups in the Jewish Passover liturgy. This takes on special significance in the NT because the cups are mentioned at the Last Supper. We see this in Matthew 26:

*And when He had taken a cup and
given thanks, He gave it to them,
saying, "Drink from it, all of you;
for this is My blood of the
covenant, which is poured out for
many for forgiveness of sins. But I
say to you, I will not drink of this
fruit of the vine from now on until*

*that day when I drink it new with
you in My Father's kingdom."
(Matt. 26:27-29 NASB)*

This was the third cup—the cup of redemption. Craig Blomberg explains: "Each of the four cups was linked to one line of Exodus 6:6–7a. This one tied in with God's promise, 'I will redeem you,' in v. 6c and hence specifically to his original liberation of the Israelites from Egypt." Paul mentions this cup in 1Corinthians 11:25. Whenever we receive the Lord's Supper, we remember that God rescued us from slavery and bondage, redeemed us with Christ's blood, and made us His own special people.

The four "I will" promises of Exodus 6:6, 7 had to do with God rescuing His "son" (in Exodus 4:22 Israel is called God's "son") from Egypt and bringing them to Himself at Sinai where He instituted the Old Covenant. The four Passover cups reminded them of this as history went on. Jesus instituted the New Covenant in His blood, sharing the cup of redemption which we share at communion. But He did not drink the fourth cup at the Last Supper, leaving it in abeyance until He will drink it with His glorified saints in His Father's kingdom. Paul said that in the Lord's Supper we proclaim His death until He comes. So we wait in hope and expectation for that fourth cup when we will be gathered together with all the saints as His own people.

Therefore when Paul says that He rescued us, all of these glorious truths and promises are implied. We were not just removed from trouble, we were brought to God to be His own special people. We are partakers of all the New Covenant promises. We need to remember these truths just as the OT saints remembered how God rescued them. For example, *ruomai* is also used in this Psalm:

*Behold, the eye of the Lord is on
those who fear Him, On those who
hope for His lovingkindness, To
deliver their soul from death And
to keep them alive in famine.
(Psalm 33:18, 19)*

Here “deliver” is our term for “rescue.” We are not only taken out of death, we are made alive forever in Christ. If any is concerned about the activities of demons, he should ignore them and focus instead on what God has done in rescuing them.

Colossians 1:13 says that we are rescued “from the domain of darkness.” This is the domain of Satan and demons. The Lord’s Prayer mentions this, using the same term for rescue when it says, “*but deliver us from the evil one*” (Matthew 6:13b HCSB). We are rescued from Satan when God takes us from darkness to light. The term translated “domain” here in Colossians is *exousia* which means “authority.” We are no longer under the authority of Satan and his evil, spiritual underlings.

Paul was called before King Agrippa to give account for himself when he was a prisoner. In Paul’s address to Agrippa he recounts something Jesus said to him when he was converted and called to preach to Gentiles: “*to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me*” (Acts 26:18 ESV). Here is what Jesus Himself said about conversion—including turning from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God! We cannot claim to be Christian and then also claim that this never happened. “Rescued” in the Greek of Colossians 1:13 is in the aorist tense. It happened at a point of time (conversion) and was not a gradual process. What is true as described in Acts 26:18 and Colossians 1:13 is true for all Christians. We must believe this and ignore anything to the contrary.

TRANSFERRED

Another aorist tense verb in Colossians 1:13 is “transferred.” Just as God took the Israelites out of Egypt to Himself, God took us out of the authority of darkness and brought us (at conversion) into the kingdom of His beloved Son. We are now sons under the authority of the Son! This is not a gradual process

with an uncertain outcome. We do not work our way out of the kingdom of darkness by defeating one demon at a time. We fully transferred from one kingdom to the other by the power and authority of God through the gospel.

Paul’s experience he explained in Acts 26:10-18 should help us understand the results of conversion. Paul had certainly been under the power of Satan. He was so filled with hatred for the gospel that witnessing the martyrdom of Stephen only caused then “Saul” to “ravage” the church (Acts 8:3). The violence of his opposition to Christ was evidence of subservience to the “power of Satan” from which Christ delivered him. Listen to Paul’s own description of his previous life:

‘And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.’ (Acts 26:10, 11 NASB)

Paul truly was under the spiritual domain of darkness, voting to have Christians put to death. God transferred him from utter darkness into the kingdom of Christ. We can read the account of that conversion in Acts 9. Soon Paul preached the very Christ he had persecuted (Acts 9:20).

When Paul wrote Colossians 1:13, 14 under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote about what had also happened to him. We might think that Paul was an extreme case. Most of us did not spend time working to have Christians killed before our conversion. But that makes the claims of Colossians all the more salient. If God delivered one of the most wicked sinners by rescuing, transferring, redeeming and forgiving him, will He not also do the same for every repentant sinner? Of course He will. So many who have contacted

me have been given the false teaching that they have to work their way out of demonic bondage little by little. They think they have to find the right person to cast out demons because they have lost hope that the gospel will do what God says it does.

The Colossians to whom Paul wrote had lived in fear of bad fate caused by the “elemental spirits” (*stoicheia*). The false teachers of Colossae claimed to have found a higher order religious experience that delivered them once and for all from these hostile, spiritual powers. Paul told them that they had already been delivered by Christ and they did not need what the religious elitists offered.³ They had been transferred into the kingdom of Christ. The profundity of this is then reinforced by the glorious “Christ Hymn” of Colossians 1:15-20. Rather than fear Satan and demons, we need to believe in the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ. We have been transferred into His glorious kingdom.

The “kingdom of His beloved Son” (ESV) probably alludes to the Messianic prophecy found in 2Samuel 7:12-16. There the greater Son of David is One from whom God’s lovingkindness will never depart (2Samuel 7:15). David is also given the following promise concerning the kingdom that will be established by his “seed”: “*Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever*” (2Samuel 7:16 NASB). The Colossian Christians and all other Christians have been transferred into the promised Messianic kingdom. Jesus is the greater Son of David who is God’s beloved Son.

The gospel is to be believed and trusted. We come to God by faith. When we believe in the gospel of Christ we also believe in the promised results of the gospel. We can separate these ideas and study them, which we are doing. But when conversion happens through the gospel, all these matters are also simultaneously true. We are not just “rescued,” but we are also transferred, redeemed and forgiven. There are many more attendant realities, but this study is about the four mentioned

in our Colossians passage. God does these things by His glorious power, they are not attained by human effort.

REDEEMED

Colossians 1:14 assures us that, as believers, we have redemption. To be redeemed is to be ransomed—or to say it another way, to be bought from slavery. It was our own sin that held us in bondage. The Bible calls our previous condition slavery to sin:

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6:16-18 NASB)

Because sin described here is sin against God, who is the true Lawgiver, redemption involves a payment of our debt to God.

Because of our lost and sinful condition in regard to God, we were also in slavery to the hostile powers of darkness:

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods. Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits? (Galatians 4:8, 9 NRSV)

Because we were enslaved by spiritual “beings” (here called elemental spirits), some have taught the false ransom theology of the atonement. The idea in that teaching is that a ransom had to be paid to Satan to buy us for God. Thankfully, that doctrine has been rejected by most because it is God

whose demands for justice must be satisfied. Notice that Paul said that we were under these hostile, spiritual beings until we were “known by God.” The Son paid the price to the Father for our redemption.

Satan is involved as the accuser of the brethren:

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.” And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. (Revelation 12:10, 11 NASB)

The blood is tied to redemption in the Bible. Satan accuses us as sinners and demands that God exact justice on us. They overcame the accuser through the “blood of the Lamb” because Christ satisfied God’s holy demand for justice and paid for our redemption.

In that regard, redemption silences both the accuser and our own hearts that accuse us (1John 3:20). We can know that God has bought us from slavery and made us His own. We are no longer enslaved to sin, Satan, and the fear of death. Our redemption is eternal: “and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12 NASB). God’s wrath was appeased. Christ’s laid-down life paid the full price to take us from slavery to sonship.

We are rescued, transferred and redeemed by God. If these truths were faithfully preached in churches everywhere, there would not be the huge market we see for false inner healing and deliverance teachings. People think there is something that extra-biblical practices will provide when they are already free according to the truths of the gospel. We do not need to work our

way through Satan’s kingdom one demon at a time. We need to believe what God said about our own status in Christ.

FORGIVEN

Paul’s fourth point in Colossians 1:13, 14 is that we are forgiven. Many Christians would be surprised at the prominent place that forgiveness of sins has in the NT. For example, Holy Spirit-filled Zacharias prophesied about John the Baptist’s role in being a forerunner for Messiah:

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us (Luke 1:76-78 NASB)

Forgiveness is thematic in Luke/Acts. The term translated forgiveness is *áphesis* which means “release.” Zacharias announces that Messianic salvation will mean release from sins.

We see the same term used in Jesus’ address to his hometown people in the synagogue of Nazareth: “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are oppressed*” (Luke 4:18 NASB). This verse cites Isaiah 61:1-2 as fulfilled through Jesus Christ. “Release” is emphasized here and throughout Luke/Acts. It is important and thematic. It is the same Greek word often translated forgiveness. Those who trust in Messiah find release from their debt of sin. Jesus “proclaims” this. We should see that the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins is part of the gospel.

Forgiveness as an essential aspect of gospel proclamation as seen in Luke’s account of the great commission: “*and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem*” (Luke

24:47). Jesus promised “release to captives” and sent His apostles to preach it. It did not take long for Peter to obey this commission when he preached forgiveness of sins in Acts 2:38: “Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” The same message is found in Acts 5:32; 10:43, 13:38, and previously mentioned Acts 26:18. We must start preaching the gospel, including the forgiveness of sins in our churches. People tend to undervalue the importance of this. The apostles did not!

Jesus told certain persons their sins were forgiven (Luke 5:20; 7:48). In the Luke 5 case this caused controversy when some resourceful persons lowered a paralyzed man through a roof to be healed by Jesus:

And when he saw their faith, he said, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Luke 5:20, 21 ESV)

Jesus then healed the man to prove that He as the “Son of Man” (a reference to the Messianic prophecy of Daniel 7:13) had authority to forgive sins. Forgiveness is central to the promises of God fulfilled in Messiah.

The idea of sin must be understood to appreciate the glories of forgiveness. Sin is departure from God’s holy law. It is rebellion against God the true Lawgiver. John called it “lawlessness” (1John 3:4). If we do not preach the reality and eternal penalty of God against sin, people will never see forgiveness as significant. Few see it as their crucial need. But if we preach the penalty of lawbreaking as eternity in hell and announce that people must turn to Christ for “release” from sin, the gospel will have its intended impact.

That this is not happening helps me understand the many emails from readers who affirm being Christian but think they need a deliverance counselor. They see their problems tied to the presence

of demons and evidently regard the forgiveness of sins as beside the point. Paul told the Colossian Christians they were forgiven precisely to assure them that they were free from bad fate caused by the hostile, spiritual powers. If we are right with God—being part of His Son’s kingdom while simultaneously delivered from Satan’s kingdom—demons have nothing to say about our well-being.

ALREADY/NOT YET

This does not mean we are never tempted, harassed, or influenced by Satan and demons. As long as we are still in our earthly bodies we will be. We are not under the authority of darkness, but we live in a very dark and wicked world that opposes the things of God. We truly need the armor of God as described in Ephesians 6.⁴ Please note that the armor of God is the gospel. It is not something new we need to add, but truths of the gospel we need to believe.

We are already out of Satan’s authority but not yet in the fully realized kingdom of God where there will be only Christ’s reign. Things then will be different in us and around us: “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (1John 3:2 NASB).

When Jesus prayed for His dear flock, He addressed our situation in the world, and what His will is for us:

I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. (John 17:15-17 NASB)

Jesus has prayed for us to be kept from the evil one while we are still in this world. He also prays that we will be sanctified by the truth which is God’s word. These are our essential needs. He never prays that we will have experts at interacting with and manipulating the spirit world to make our lives better. The Father who delivered us from the

authority of darkness and placed us in His Son’s kingdom will also keep us from the evil one. We must believe this and reject the false warfare worldview many have been taught.

Some still ask, “but I am harassed by spirits, what can I do”? The answer is to do like Paul when tormented by a “messenger (lit. ‘angel’) of Satan” (2Corinthians 12:7). Paul appealed to God. God’s answer was that His grace is sufficient. Whatever existence in this world of darkness as Christians means regarding our spiritual battles, God’s all sufficient grace is the answer. We can always appeal to the throne of grace for timely help: “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16 NASB). Directly interacting with spirits will make things worse. Going to God will comfort our souls.

To underscore how important our access to the throne of grace is, let’s consider a passage that instructs us not to directly interact with Satan:

But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. (Jude 1:9, 10 NASB)

Here we find a greater to lesser argument: If the greater (Michael) would not dare to directly rebuke the devil, how much more should the lesser (false teachers who revile spiritual things they do not understand) refrain from rebuking the devil. When combined with Hebrews 4:16, we come to an important truth: when concerned about the devil and his negative influence, we can either go to God at the throne of grace as we are commanded to do, or try to fight Satan directly as we are commanded not to do! The correct choice is obvious.

CONCLUSION

Being rescued, transferred, redeemed and forgiven is an awesome reality for every Christian. Paul is not referring so some elite super-saints. He wrote to a Colossian church he had not visited. Epaphras had brought them the gospel. Paul could hardly be thinking of only some of the saints there. Every believer is in this same blessed state. This is the promise of God.

Do not believe the many teachings that claim we need to work our way through our memories using regression therapy. This will put us into confusion that will never allow us to believe the promises of God. Do not believe the many spiritual warfare teachings that claim that we must get demons cast out of us and then embark on some special process to keep them out. If you have been under such teachings, you already know that the proposed processes are endless and ultimately hopeless. They

confuse us into thinking that what Christ did for us only made it possible to get into a better state but did not accomplish it.

If we believe the promises of God we will know we are safe. If we go to Christ at the throne of grace rather than to false teachers, we will find grace, mercy and help. If we speak to one another words of encouragement and stop interacting with spirits, we will find peace and assurance through the gospel. Listen to the words of Jesus: "*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*" (**Luke 12:32** ESV). "Fear not" is in the imperative in the Greek and could be translated "stop fearing!" We need to stop fearing and believe the promises of God who cannot lie. God will keep us and will never leave us to work our way through the world of the spirits to find His kingdom. The righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit of the kingdom (Romans 14:17) are ours now. Let us believe it.

End Notes

1. Septuagint the Greek Old Testament
2. The complete word study dictionary: New Testament: "To draw or snatch from danger, rescue, deliver. This is more with the meaning of drawing to oneself than merely rescuing from someone or something." (electronic edition) Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, pp. 390–391). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
3. See CIC Issues 69, 70, 71 for a fuller discussion of the Colossian heresy.
4. See CIC issue 122: <http://cicministry.org/commentary/issue122.htm> for exegesis on the armor of God in Ephesians