



The Lord uses creation for his own redemptive purposes

***“...and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm
and with mighty acts of judgment.”***

Exodus 6:6

On the front page of this morning's newspaper there is the following heading, *“Large asteroid misses Earth by a whisker”* and underneath there is the caption, *“Devastation Averted.”* Man is accustomed to think that devastations are part of this world in which we live. Whether man worries about asteroids falling out of the sky, or the next earthquake that will destroy some major city, or some major flooding or drought and famines, man lives in the constant fear of the devastations that may come upon us. Those are also the fears that motivate the environmental movements of our day. They see man bringing calamity upon himself as he destroys the environment.

While mankind sees the calamities of this world as belonging to the normal things of this life, the Scriptures reveal something different. The Scriptures reveal an almighty God who in his providence is in control of the whole earth. Not only is the Lord God in control of the lives of man, but He also controls all the elements of creation. We do not live in a creation that is out of control, but in a creation that is always responsive to the commands of God.

The Lord God reveals himself in Egypt as the Almighty One who has complete mastery over every aspect of nature. He says to his people Israel, *“I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.”* The Lord does not reveal his power and might in the conventional way of man by defeating Egypt with a mighty army. Instead He uses the forces of nature to destroy the mighty Egyptian power. His judgment on Egypt is revealed in the ten plagues. The Lord also reveals his judgment when He causes Pharaoh and his great army to be drowned in the Red Sea.

The Lord teaches his people Israel that He uses his creation for his own redemptive purposes. The Lord in his providence uses the forces of nature to bring judgment upon the wicked but redemption for the righteous. This is an important theme that runs through the whole of Scriptures. In the very beginning we have a beautiful description of God's creation activity. God brings about a beautiful order out of a world that was formless, empty and dark (Genesis 1:1). He separated the water from the land, the night from the day so that God prepared for man a most beautiful place to dwell. Out of the chaos, the Lord created a perfectly ordered world where men never feared calamities such as earthquakes, floods or plagues. It was paradise.

When man fell into sin, that wonderful order of creation was disturbed. Although the Lord in his mercy did not allow the earth to fall back into utter chaos, yet the Lord often used great calamities to bring his judgment upon man. But his judgments must always be seen within the context of his redemptive purposes. In the time of Noah, the Lord used the great flood to destroy all of mankind and yet he also used this means of judgment to save Noah and his family. You find the same pattern in Egypt. The Lord uses the plagues and the Red Sea to bring his terrible judgment on Egypt, and at the same time work deliverance for his people Israel.

When Jesus Christ came to this world, He reveals his complete mastery over creation. There can be no doubt that He is our Immanuel, God with us, for He has the power to bring about order in the chaos of this world. He has the power to restore health, to rebuke the storms of the sea to be quiet, to walk over the water, and to feed thousands with a few loaves and some fish. His mastery over creation serves to reveal Him as the great redeemer and Saviour of his people.

In order to redeem us, Christ had to face the judgment of his Father. At the time of his crucifixion, all the forces of creation were marshalled against our Lord. The order of creation was turned to chaos, for the day turned into darkness, the earth shook, and the rocks split. This chaotic happening on Golgotha was God's sign that creation was turned against Christ as an instrument of judgment. They reveal the full wrath and fury of God brought against Christ on account of our sins. Through this judgment Christ was punished, but we have been redeemed from our sins.

When we understand God's use of his creation that also gives us a proper perspective of what is happening in the world around us. When we experience and see calamities in this world, we know that the Lord is busy with his redemptive purposes. It is the means by which our God brings his judgment upon wicked men, but it is also a call to mankind to repent and seek their deliverance in Jesus Christ. God's judgment today is intended for the redemption of man.

The Lord has also revealed that everything must work towards the final Day of Judgment. In the end our Saviour will return from heaven. On that day the Lord will again use the forces of creation for his redemptive purpose. The book of Revelation reveals that the plagues and earthquakes and great upheaval of creation will signal the destruction of the wicked (Revelation 16-18). Therefore the upheavals of creation in our day are a sure sign of the destruction that will come upon all those who today oppose the God of heaven and earth. While wicked men will be destroyed in the great judgment, all those in Christ Jesus will be delivered. Paradise will be restored so that there will again be perfect order in God's creation. Never again will man live in fear of flooding, earthquakes or other disasters. The new earth will be a fitting dwelling place for all those redeemed by Christ Jesus. The redeemed may forever praise and magnify the Almighty God of heaven and earth.

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