

Isaiah 43:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

Analysis

For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour. This verse unveils God's covenant faithfulness through three divine titles. The Hebrew YHWH Elohim (LORD thy God) emphasizes personal relationship within covenant, while Qedosh Yisrael (Holy One of Israel) maintains God's transcendent otherness even in intimacy. The title moshia' (Saviour) points to God's active deliverance, a theme fulfilled supremely in Christ.

The phrase "I gave Egypt for thy ransom" employs the Hebrew kopher (ransom, covering), a legal term for substitutionary payment. God providentially orchestrated Cyrus's conquest of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba (modern Sudan and Yemen) as part of the geopolitical arrangements enabling Israel's return from exile. This historical ransom foreshadows the ultimate ransom of Christ's blood (Mark 10:45, 1 Peter 1:18-19).

From a Reformed perspective, this demonstrates God's sovereign grace in election - Israel did not earn redemption but received it as unmerited favor. God values His chosen people so highly that nations serve as ransom payment. This prefigures the New Covenant where Christ's precious blood ransoms an elect people from every nation (Revelation 5:9).

Historical Context

This prophecy was delivered during the Babylonian exile (586-538 BC) when Israel faced national extinction. The reference to Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba as ransom relates to historical events during Cyrus the Great's conquests (539-525 BC). Persia's expansion into North Africa occurred concurrently with Israel's restoration, suggesting divine providence orchestrated international politics for covenant purposes. Ancient Near Eastern law recognized substitutionary ransom (kopher) as a legal mechanism, which Isaiah applies theologically to God's redemptive work.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does God's willingness to give nations as ransom for Israel deepen your understanding of His valuation of the elect?
2. In what ways does this Old Testament ransom foreshadow the infinite worth of Christ's atoning sacrifice?
3. How should recognizing yourself as 'precious' and 'honoured' in God's sight (v. 4) shape your identity and purpose?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	אֲנִי	יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֶיךָ	קָדוֹשׁ	יְשׁוּעָא	לְ
H3588	H589	For I am the LORD	thy God	the Holy One	of Israel	thy Saviour
		H3068	H430	H6918	H3478	H3467
נָתַתִּי	כְּפָרָךְ	מִצֵּרִים	כִּי	וּסְבָא	תַּחְתִּיבִּי:	
I gave	for thy ransom	Egypt	Ethiopia	and Seba		
H5414	H3724	H4714	H3568	H5434	H8478	

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 45:15 (Salvation): Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.

Isaiah 60:16 (Salvation): Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

Exodus 20:2 (References God): I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Isaiah 49:26 (Salvation): And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

Proverbs 21:18 (Redemption): The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.

Isaiah 45:21 (Salvation): Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.

Jude 1:25 (Salvation): To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Hosea 13:4 (Salvation): Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.

Isaiah 30:11 (Holy): Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

Proverbs 11:8 (Parallel theme): The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.

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