

2016 XSI Workshop: “Who is like Yahweh?”

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Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, *because He delights in unchanging love*. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob and unchanging love to Abraham, which You swore to our forefathers from the days of old. Micah 7:18-20

Who is like Yahweh our God, who is enthroned on high, who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth? He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of His people. He makes the barren woman abide in the house as a joyful mother of children. Praise the Lord! Psalm 113:5-9

Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders... *In Your lovingkindness* You have led the people whom You have redeemed. Exodus 15:11,13

Why the question?

- Love is at the *center* of Christian theology—doctrine of God and meaning of salvation
Unique relevance of God to the human situation
- Love is at the *center* of Christian witness—relating the gospel in word and life-witness
What kind of people must we be?
The tangible *dimensions* of knowing God (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)
The tangible *effects* of knowing God (Micah 7:8)

Exegetical and systematic theology

- Theology and philosophy—historical reflections and contributions
Doctrine and apologetics
Dilemmas rooted in philosophy’s limitations
impassibility and love
freedom and predestination/foreknowledge
- Exegetical and literary dimensions of theology:
Matter of scriptural *emphasis* and *unity*
Bible’s central affirmation: 246x *hesed*, (*aheb* 230x); 287x *agapeo*

Abstract v. personal categories

The eternal God concerns Himself with what is happening in time:

For this says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."
Isaiah 57:15

The bricks we collect in order to construct the biblical image of God are, as a rule, conceptual notions, such as goodness, justice, wisdom, unity. In terms of frequency of usage in biblical language, they are surpassed by statements referring to God's *pathos*.... *Pathos* denotes, not an idea of goodness, but a living care, a dynamic relation between God and man... To the biblical mind the denial of man's relevance to God is as inconceivable as the denial of God's relevance to man. This principle leads to the basic affirmation of God's participation in human history, to the certainty that the events in the world concern Him and arouse His reaction. It finds its deepest expression in the fact that God can actually suffer.

Abraham Heschel. *The Prophets*, 286, 289

"Show me Your glory"

- Exodus 33:11; 17-19...34:6-8 (see Psalm 86:15; 103:8; Jonah 4:2; Nahum 1:3; Joel 2:13...)

- "Abounding *hesed*"

Generosity means a disposition to give to others in a way which has no mercenary motive and is not limited by what the recipients deserve but consistently goes beyond it... Generosity is, so to speak, the focal point of God's moral perfection; it is the quality which determines how all of God's other excellencies are to be displayed. God overflows with generosity.

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 162

- faithful to His word—his promises 32x (see Ps. 138:2; 85:10)—loyal 6x; mercy 15x (Ps. 103:4)

- love in pursuit—see Isaiah 43:4; Hosea 1:2; 2:5-8.

a "jealous" love—Exodus 34:14; James 4:5

Praiseworthy zeal to *preserve* something supremely precious or to *protect* a love relationship or to *avenge* it when broken.

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 170

- everlasting (50x)—see Psalm 136; Lam. 3:22

- justice and love—Jeremiah 9:24; Ps. 36:10. Seeking the good of the loved one

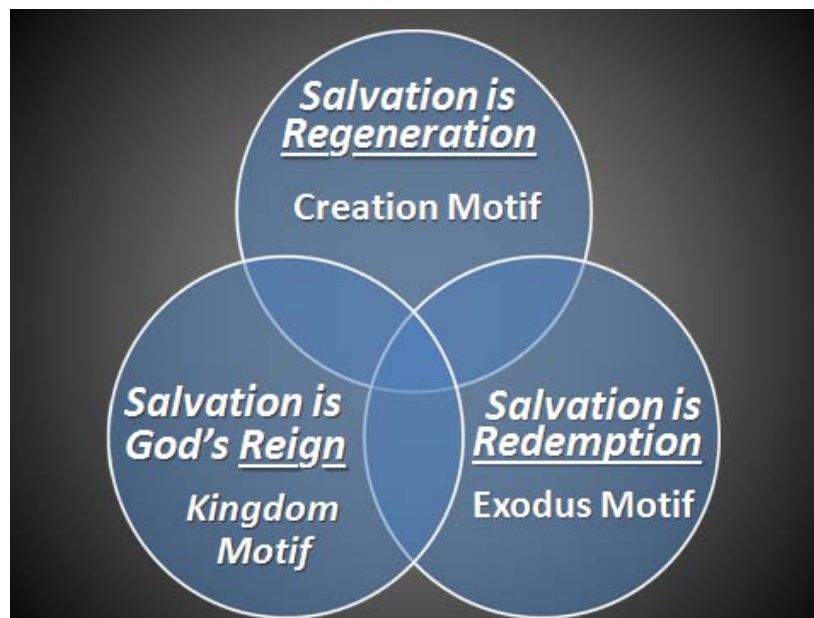
Hesed and salvation

- Ps. 98:3; Ps. 85:7,19; Ps. 136:1-22; Ps. 13:5
- Three key motifs of salvation

Thus says the Lord your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, “For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and will bring them all down as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, into the ships in which they rejoice. I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. Isaiah 43:14,15

He rescued 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. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or in heaven.

Colossians 1:13-20



- *Hesed*, creation and *regeneration*—Ps. 33:5-7; 136:1-9; 51:1,10 (Titus 3:4-6)
- *Hesed*, exodus and *redemption*—Ex. 15:13,16; Ps. 136:10ff. (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)
- *Hesed*, kingdom and *reign*—Ps. 89:1ff; Jeremiah 31:1-3; 2 Sam. 7:13-17 (Colossians 1:13)

Hesed and the people of God

- *Knowing the heart of God: to represent God, you have to experience the world as He does*

Not merely knowing *about* God (Jonah 4:2)

For the brokenness of the daughter of my people I am broken; I mourn, dismay has taken hold of me... My heart is broken within me, all my bonds tremble; I have become like a drunken man, even like a man overcome with wine, because of the Lord and because of His holy words. For the land is full of adulterers; for the land mourns because of the curse.

Jeremiah 8:21; 23:9,10

Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me... Do we need letters of commendation from you? You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all man...

Isaiah 49:16; 2 Corinthians 3:1,2

- *Knowing God and personal transformation*

There is no self-understanding without God-understanding (1 Chronicles 28:9)

Hasid—holy ones, saints,. Whether God's people in the OT were called *hasid* because they were characterized by *hesed* or were so called because they were objects of God's *hesed* may not be certain.

Harris, Archer, Waltke, *TWOT*, 1:307

Identity truths, so vital to spiritual growth, are rooted in truths about God—the focus begins with Him:

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits:

Who pardons all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases;

Who redeems your life from the pit;

Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;

Who satisfies your years with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle.

Psalms 103:1-5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...

Ephesians 1:3-14

Exploring the heart of God

- *Topical Bible study*
Dimensions of *hesed* in the Psalms
- *Power of memory*
What is the legacy of God's *hesed* in your life?
- *Prayer for the heart of God*
A challenge for intercession and action