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EXODUS

Devotional Thoughts for 40 Days or 40 Nights

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D E R I D D E R

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EXODUS

Devotional thoughts for 40 days or 40 nights

“For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.” Ex. 40:38

We are all on a journey. God has given us his word as a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night to be with us throughout the way. These short devotional thoughts are just glimpses of His Glory I have seen on the way to heaven. The Book of Exodus has been divided up by someone into forty chapters. Forty is the number of testing. As well as a journey, every day is a test. I have passed some tests, and like Moses, some I failed. Some lessons are simple. Some lessons I have found hard to learn, and so I have to learn them again. Perhaps these brief observations will encourage someone for forty days or forty nights in their own journey. Perhaps the sooner we learn what God is trying to teach us, the sooner we will come to Canaan

As any saint reads Exodus, they cannot help but see themselves, first in chains and then in gains. Each can relate to the failure and the good fortune of Moses. Each remembers with reverence the day (or the night) they left Egypt and set off in faith for the Promised Land.

X1- Pyramid Schemes

“And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage”

Israel, means “Prince of God.” These children of Israel were living far below their potential. They were slaves. God made them for better things than this. Today there are still millions living in some spiritual Egypt, living far lower than God ever intended, living in bondage to sin.

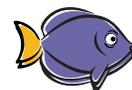
Egypt is most famous for its pyramids, especially those that still tower over the sands of Giza. As impressive as these ancient archeological wonders are, it should be pointed out (to put things in their proper perspective), that these are merely tombstones. Although they seem to be larger than life, and although they were filled with Pharaoh’s gold, they were also filled with Pharaoh’s bones.

The story begins with an incarceration of a people by a “king who knew not Joseph.” This ignorance was an awful crown to wear. A man could know everything and still be a spiritual ignoramus if he knows not God. Worst than that, Pharaoh was brought up to believe that somehow *he was god*. Before we shake our heads at him however, let us not forget a whole generation that has cut its teeth on the teething ring of humanism that also worships at the altars of self-gratification and self-indulgence.

Egypt was the most educated and intelligent nation on earth. Pharaoh and the sons of Pharaoh knew about astronomy, geography, metallurgy, geometry, geology, agriculture, and architecture. However there came a time when they knew not Joseph, and worse than that, they knew not God. They worshipped rivers, and rocks, and creatures of the earth.

What would America be if our school children “knew not Washington,” or “knew not Lincoln?” The saddest nation is not the one who “knows not Joseph,” it is the one who knows not Jesus. All the treasures, pleasures, and riches of this world are but trinkets in a molding mummy’s tomb when compared to the things God has prepared for those who know and love him. Don’t be fooled by pyramid schemes.

“And this is life eternal, that men might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” John 17:3



X2- Slave Trade

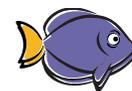
The slave trade is still thriving today. Helping people out of their chains is a high and holy calling. Millions are yet in bondage. There is the bondage of debt, the bondage of ignorance, the bondage of fear and superstition. There is the bondage of addiction, and yet, as bad as these are, none of these can compare to the worst bondage of all: the bondage of sin. God wants to break that chain. God wants to set the prisoners free.

The first step in getting out of bondage is in wanting to be free. Once someone recognizes that there is a better life that exists beyond the bitter life, they may need some help to find the way. While there are many ways that may have led us to where we are in Egypt, there is only one way to get us out. That is God's way.

Moses tried his own way. Moses tried his hand at politics. Many still think that it is the way. Many think the solution to life's problems is in changing the methods, the manners, or the morals of people. Many think that changing Pharaohs will get them out of Egypt. Politics is not the answer. It was politics that made it politically incorrect to give birth to a man-child in Egypt. Politics still struggles with immigrants and what to do with little babies (born and unborn). Politics is still about who is in charge, who rules the Nile, and who rules the world. Politics landed Moses into troubled waters. Moses was saved by grace, and then he grew up in the lap of luxury.

After becoming a man, Moses chose to identify with the underprivileged, and lent himself to mitigate their miseries and mediate their misunderstandings only to find out that in politics the dog may bite the hand that feeds it. "Who made thee prince and a judge over us?" they asked. Moses found out the hard way that the best of intentions and the best of inventions will not get the people to the promised land.

We cannot vote our way out of Egypt. We cannot work our way out either. There is never an end to all the pyramid building. We can not think our way out or secretly "slink" our way out. Everything we try will fail. Moses failed and then fled. It took Moses (full of himself) forty years to fail. It took another forty years for God to empty him of "self." It is only when we realize that we are empty or "running on empty" that we are ready for the fullness of God.



X3- Who's Who

When we were young we thought we were going to set the world on fire. We were going to “change things.” We were going to make things better, and set things right. We were naive. There was a time when we felt invincible. But, just like Moses, we found out that the “system” is much too powerful for us. Somehow the fire went out. The world calls it “mid-life crisis,” or “burn-out.” Sometimes it is just called plain old disappointment. Moses knew what that was.

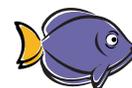
One day, many years later, Moses was “minding his own business,” (or to be more accurate, his father-in-law’s business) when a fire began to burn again. This time it was God’s fire. This time it was God’s power. This time it was God’s plan. Sooner or later everyone comes across this burning bush. Sooner or later everyone has an opportunity to discover what real fire is. *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance” said John, “but he that cometh after me is mightier than I.....he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire”* (Mat. 3:11).

When God called Moses, Moses was so emptied of ambition and self esteem that he asked “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?” There were a hundred excuses Moses could give for not doing this thing God was asking. “Who am I?” asked Moses. Many have asked this very question. The answer was not in Who Moses was, but in who God was. Moses discovered that God was the Great I AM. No one ever truly discovers who they are until they discover who God is.

Who am I? The prodigal son worked in the pig pen until, “he came to himself.” First we must come to our self, or to our senses. First we must understand like Moses that we are nothing and God is everything. First we must go to Midian before we are ready for the mountain, even the “mountain of Horeb.”

Moses was humbled by life and yet he humbled himself even more when he stood barefoot before the burning bush listening to voice and the word of God. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up,” said James. It is a law of heaven. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.”

The fire of the bush was unlike any fire Moses had ever known. All other fires, needed fuel; not this one. This fire had an un-worldly source. So it is for all that have ever been set on fire by God. They burn, but like the bush, they are not consumed.



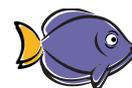
X4- Yes

It is called Exodus. It is the story of the greatest escape the world has ever known. It was a miraculous mass migration of an entire nation in a single night. It is the story of deliverance from the bondage and shackles of slavery. It is the story of the birth of a nation. The story of Moses is called Exodus. It is the story of the great escape. I think every soul on earth that can read has heard of Moses. But for every Moses and the story of Exodus, there are a thousand untold stories of things that never happened because of excuses people made for not doing God's will. Moses almost missed the miracle.

At the burning bush we see that the Great God JEHOVAH is both powerful and patient. This reluctant renegade from Egypt did not want to go back. Who could blame him? One after another, he raised his objections. He had what he thought were very good reasons not to do what God was asking him to do. He said, "No one will listen to me." "I am not eloquent." "No one will believe God spoke to me, let alone appeared to me." Even God seems to have his limits when it comes to listening to our excuses, for at last God expresses his anger. In the end Moses submitted to the will and call of God.

Had Moses persisted and refused to do the thing God asked, you and I would be able to walk down Ben Yehuda Street in the heart of modern Jerusalem, and ask anyone who Moses was, only to hear them reply, "Who?" Everyone knows about Moses, not because he was taken out of the bulrushes, nor because he grew up the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. Everyone knows who Moses was because he said "yes" to God.

You and I are not Moses, but God has a will for us as well. Never say "no" to God. Moses had been emptied of Moses to the point that God and Moses both knew that this would be the story, not about what man could do, but rather the story about what God could do. It was to be a story of redemption.



X5 -“A Life in Quotes”

Moses was to be a messenger. He was to deliver a message from God to Pharaoh. The power of his ministry and the success of his mission depended not on eloquence but of accuracy. He needed to be clear not clever. He begins with the sacred imprimatur of divine inspiration, “Thus saith the Lord.” Here is the heart of any successful ministry. Here is the requirement of any successful life. There is safety and success inside the quotes. Go outside, live outside of what God said and you are living on shaky ground. You are living outside the will of God. Live within the quotes of what God said and you are on your way to the promised land. Success is just another word for the will of God. What happens to us after we have been obedient is not the important thing. Success is knowing and doing God’s will.

The job of Moses was not to “win” Pharaoh. He tried none of the modern marketing methods used by evangelicals today. His goal was not that Pharaoh “like him first” or offer him a better way of life. Pharaoh is not a type of “poor lost sinner” as much as he is a type of the hard cruel world and the representative of Satan and a system that stands against the God of Heaven. But worse than all that, Pharaoh is the picture of the little despot of “Self” that sits on the throne of every heart that thinks itself the sovereign. For Pharaoh’s response to Moses has been echoed in a billion hearts when confronted with the “thus saith the Lord” of evangelical truth. Pharaoh’s problem is man’s problem. “I know not the LORD.” However, it is not his ignorance that is as troubling as much as his arrogance. “Who is the LORD that I should obey him?”

He should have listened to Moses. He should have been more humble. Pharaoh responded by taking away the peasant’s straw and sent them back to greater burdens. Things sometimes get worse before they get better when we determine to live within the quotes, but God will get his glory. Woe to the man who refuses to bow before the gentleness of God’s simple requests, they will one day be forced to bend before God in judgment.

Jesus quoted Moses when he stood before Satan, the evil spirit that rules a world in rebellion to God. When tempted to follow another path, Jesus said “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Jesus, the Word of God incarnate always did those things that pleased the Father. He lived his life in “quotes.”



X6- Watch This

“Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh.”

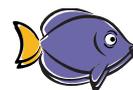
If someone could preach to man with powerful and poetic words enabling them to catch a glimpse of hell, and for a moment smell the acrid smoke, or feel the heat of that horrible place, we would think it would be enough to send any sinner running into the arms of God. We would be wrong. Man’s heart is harder than that.

“Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent,” said the once rich man in Luke. But Abraham sets us straight, “If they hear not Moses, and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

It was as if Moses rose from the dead. Forty years he was banished and forgotten, as good as dead. Then there he was bringing a message, not from hell, but from heaven, and it was refused. Those who will not know God’s gentleness will one day know God’s Judgment. Those who do not want to know Jesus will know JEHOVAH.

If you do not think man’s heart is hard, look at Pharaoh. Do not blame God for the hardness of Pharaoh’s heart. As gravity is the law that pulls the jumper to the earth in his suicide, so there is a spiritual law that begins to turn the heart to stone the very first time we say “no” to God. Neither Pharaoh nor the poor sinner realizes the danger they in, or how close they are to the awful judgment when they close their ears to God’s gracious plea.

“Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh.” What we see is sobering. Even though for all his trouble and all his faithfulness Moses only saw more pain, and although Moses once again took his eyes off God and worried about his own inadequacies, God was about to put on a display so awesomely incredible that the whole world would never forget the ten plagues of Egypt. “Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh.”



X7- Wonder of Wonders

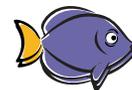
“And Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.” Ex. 7:11

The Egyptian wise men met Moses head on in the war of wonders. Salvation involves “a war of words,” “a war of wills, and “a war of wonders.” There is a conflict and contest of words going on. On one hand there is what God said, on the other what man and Pharaoh says. Salvation depends on which word wins our heart. There is also a battle of the wills. God wants Pharaoh to “Let [his] people go.” Pharaoh has other plans. Lastly, there is a “war of wonders.” The plagues of Egypt are nothing short of the demon against the divine. Aaron cast the rod to the ground and it became a serpent. Aaron’s rod becoming a serpent was God’s validation of the message. The Egyptians however had to resort to “enchantments.” For a moment Pharaoh must have felt equal to the battle, but he was not.

Let us all understand the difference. When man does it, it is magic. When God does it, it is miracle. Unfortunately, men are too easily impressed with magic. Magic is “slight of hand.” Magic is illusion. Magic is “smoke and mirrors.” When man does it, we are fooled. When God does it, it is a fact; and it is awesome.

Religion is mostly magic. It is filled with superstition and showmanship. Salvation, on the other hand is not “slight of hand,” rather it is God’s “might of hand.” Aaron’s serpent swallowed the Egyptian’s serpents. How the sorcerers did it is unimportant. Whether they used drugs or demons is also unimportant. The wonders of Moses were meant only to underscore the veracity of the Word of God, and in the end, all the wisdom of the world will be swallowed up by truth, for God is true.

Let us not settle for imitations. Let us not give in to fear and superstition. Let us simply speak the word in love, knowing that we need no greater miracle than the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the wonder of wonders found in God’s love already demonstrated for us on the cross.



X8- Today

“And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt”

Egypt has been called the “gift of the Nile.” The Nile had always been a mystery. Its headwaters hidden high in equatorial Africa eluded many including Livingston who died while searching for it. Plutarch the Greek historian said the Egyptians called the Nile their “Father and Savior.” Once a year the banks of the river would overflow and deposit nutrition rich silt along its banks. The Egyptians worshipped the River. The Nile was the “glory” of Egypt. It was their pride and joy.

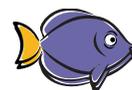
God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Pharaoh was not humble. The Pharaoh who would not “give in” to the pleas would eventually “give up” to the plagues. God turned the blue waters of the Nile to blood. He touched their “glory” and it became a “bloody stinking mess” (Ex. 8:17-18). God cursed their Pride and Joy in judgment.

What is your “Pride and Joy.” If it is anything other than Jesus, think again. Paul said “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14).

After the blood came the frogs. The frog was the symbol of fertility which both ancient and modern man still worships. Those who are in bondage to passion know nothing of the real beauty of God’s gift of marriage and the “act of love.” It was only fitting that in this plague God would bring these croaking creatures into the Egyptian’s “house, and into [their] bedchamber, and upon [their] bed.”

The foulness and revulsion of sin should be enough to break the sinners resolve and make him cry out “what must I do to be saved?” but it is not. Sin is a spiritual madness that invades the brain as well as the soul like some misty fog that hangs over a swamp, shrouding the ugly things that lie beneath the waters. Isaiah speaks for God when he says “come now, let us reason together...” Sin is unreasonable.

Never is this more evidenced than in the foolish reply of the chagrined king who knows he must change his ways as well as his mind, but announces that he will do it “tomorrow.” “Tomorrow...be it according to thy word.” Pharaoh put off for tomorrow the thing he needed to do today. For him tomorrow was always one day away. Never tell God he must wait until “tomorrow.”



X9-All Hail

God can touch the status quo- (the Nile was turned to blood). God can make your life unpleasant- (as with a plague of frogs). God can cause great irritation –(gnats), frustration-(flies), He can allow your health to break (with boils). God can make deep withdrawals from wealth-(bulls), but worse than that, God can bring the plagues of trouble right into your heart- (9:14). God sent a hail of fire.

God put on a fireworks display the likes of which had never before been seen in Egypt (or since). A collision of weather fronts brought hail and with it fire. The lightning fell with a fury. Even Pharaoh was afraid. The lightning bolts flew down like spears- and ran along the ground like snakes of fire.

God told Pharaoh why he made him. Once again, he should have listened. “in very deed for this cause have I raise thee up, for to show in thee my power.” This is the reason everyone was born. Each must ask the question- “Why, for what purpose was I born? Why was I created? The Bible is clear “All things were made by him and for him” (Col. 1:16), and that includes Pharaoh. The sooner we find that out the better. God has made us a vessel for his own purposes. We were not made for ourselves. We were made for God.

Pharaoh made a startling admission. He actually uttered the words “I have sinned.” There he was not far from salvation. But knowing that we are sinners in only the diagnosis not the remedy. The sinner must take God’s medicine. We must take Christ as Lord and Savior. This is the same spot where countless numbers come so close. It is one thing to want a Savior, (Pharaoh wanted that) it is another thing to want a Lord. Herod knew that there was only room for one king of the Jews. It was in his unwillingness to lose the throne that he destroyed the infants of Bethlehem. The Pharaoh of self may believe, but he will not bow.

Today the most powerful political figure hears “Hail to the Chief” when he marches into the room. The hail Pharaoh heard fall that day made an awful sound, yet as awful as it was, it was nothing compared to the sound of his own lamentation rising up out of the depths of hell or the sound of eternal reproach “what shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”



X10- No Deal

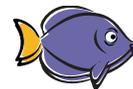
There often comes a time when sinners are willing to strike some kind of religious bargain with God. They are ready to compromise. They are willing to “Let my people go,” but will set certain conditions that they do not go “too far.” (8:28). They also insist that they can remain as they are, where they are and there is no need to be extreme and actually leave Egypt. “Stay in the Land,” said Pharaoh (8:25). When these suggestions fail two more are placed on the table. “Go,” but leave your women and children behind. And lastly, “Go if you must, but leave you cattle.”

Satan is a subtle one still. Oh, serve God if you want, but stay in Egypt, stay in the world. While we may be in the world, we can not be of the world. While our feet may be in the world or in stocks on Patmos, our hearts must be in heaven. Moses must leave Egypt to know and follow God. The second bit of advice is still offered today. Oh, be religious, but just don’t get carried away too far. The problem with that is that just being religious does not go far enough. “Ye must be born again.”

It the days of Moses the temptation was to leave the women and children behind while the men went out to worship. Today the error is reversed and the women and children are encouraged to go off to worship and the men are left behind. Joshua had it right when he said “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Lastly, what a compromise it would have been if they left their cattle behind. “Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed;” There can be no real worship without sacrifice. The cattle must come.

We must leave Egypt. We cannot compromise. We must turn our backs to Pharaoh. We cannot have two masters, for there will always be confusion as to our citizenship and loyalty. Christ is King, and He alone is everything.



X11- To Heart

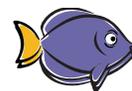
First there was darkness. Then there was death. God would bring one last plague to Egypt. God was making an example out of man's arrogance. Pride is a despicable attitude that hardens the heart that holds it. It is sin's scepter. Every Pharaoh of "self" must drop it in the dust. God alone must sit on the throne. In a spiritual sense, every sinner sits where Pharaoh sat. Everyone must one day decide who is LORD. The spirit of self takes on royal airs and clings to power like a petty dictator. Salvation comes only when that spirit is broken. "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Ps. 34:18). "How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? (10:3). What would it take to break this man's heart?

Pharaoh had a son. Each has someone or something that is closest to his heart. God is always aiming for our hearts. Our heads can rationalize rivers turning red. Our heads can explain the frogs and the boils as a turn of "misfortune." Ancient heads could even explain the fire from the sky and the shroud of darkness with their twisted theology. God, however, had one last plague that would break the back of Egypt and the hardest heart. "And all the first born in the land of Egypt shall die..." (11:5).

All this thunder, all this judgment, all this wrath says more about man than it does about God. Sin is a awful reign of government. It is not easily overthrown. Jeremiah said of the human heart, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer 17:9). God knows it.

One of the ancient relics collected from Egypt's tombs is a oval object called a Scarab. These were charms. Some were made of stone, some of wood, some of gold and precious things. Even today some women wear them as things of beauty. They say volumes about the Egypt that Moses forsook in order to inherit the eternal riches of Christ. The scarab was an image of the Dung beetle. Egyptians thought these insects to be sacred because they rose up out of the excrement of men and animals. Such a civilization knows nothing of a holy God. And today much of what fascinates modern man is not far removed from what crawls out of a dung heap.

To those who think God too harsh with Egypt's sons, I can only point to Calvary. There God's Son paid a greater price for our redemption and took our plagues and took our place.



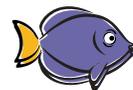
X12-Telling Time

The Hebrew children had spent their last day in slavery. Now they were to experience their last night in Egypt. They were about to turn their backs on bondage. They were about to be removed from the authority and power of Pharaoh. They were to eat one last meal and mark it forever as a memorial. The Passover lamb was to be slain. "The whole assembly of Israel was to kill it in the evening." They were to eat it with bitter herbs, and without leaven. They were to eat it with their "loins girded." They were to apply the blood to their doors. They were to mark that night and remember. It was the end. It was also the beginning. "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months. A new life would be celebrated with a new calendar. The first month would hereafter be the last they spent as slaves. Now they would be God's servants. At last it was time to go. At last it was midnight. (v.29).

Pharaoh waited too long. God gave him nine plagues and perhaps a million chances to believe and be saved, but he would have none of it. Now it was midnight. Now he would get the ultimate answer to his question, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him?" It finally came down to this. Blood. There was no other way out of Egypt. This last and final plague wafted in with the chill of night. No sentry, no guard, no, not the armies of Egypt could protect Pharaoh's house from this last judgment. Death.

Every home without the blood of the lamb would feel the pangs of death. Only the blood of the lamb, as prescribed by God could stay the awful hand. God assured Israel, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you."

For some it is almost midnight. Some still have a minute to repent and believe. Some are about to run out of grace they have taken for granted. Some are about to start a new life marked from the moment of their salvation. Some are about to cross a line that shall never know again the light of day, and be forever reminded of the midnight when they missed their personal exodus, when they missed salvation.



X13-A Reminder

“Remember this day” How could they forget? How could they forget the day they had passed over. How could anyone forget that last night and the blood stained door? “Remember this day.” How could they ever forget walking through the heap of water on one side and on the other? How could they forget so great salvation?

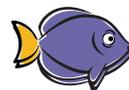
How could we forget Gethsemane? How could we forget his agony? How could I forget his love for me? Lead me to Calvary. For all their journey, Israel was given a pillar to follow. It was a light by night and a shield of cloud by day. Israel was given a feast with a simple name so they would never forget, the Passover. Israel had a song, the song of Moses which they would forever raise.

We have Jesus. Jesus means Savior. How could we forget? “Remember me,” said Jesus. And yet, countless numbers lay claim to his name and live as if they never left Egypt.

“Sanctify unto me all the firstborn” (13:1). Did God slay the firstborn of Egypt? Did God spare the first born that ate with you the lamb that night? Again and again when Moses brought God’s Word to Pharaoh he said , “Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go that they may serve me.” There is a “still-birth” rather than a “new-birth” unless we grasp this living truth. We are saved to serve.

God could have led Israel up the coast and directly to Cannan. He did not. It had nothing to do with geography or the “lay of the land.” It was more a problem of the “way of the land.” God did not want to take his people out of Egypt and take them to the land of the Philistines (13:17). The Philistines were not much better than the Egyptians when it comes to worldliness. Some say they were worse, for they were men of war.

Believers are those who have been delivered from Egypt. The cost of our freedom was great and grave. Jesus gave his precious blood to redeem us. We are not to love the world nor the things of the world. This world is no friend to grace. What we are to do is remember him. He has instituted a memorial feast at which all the redeemed are welcome. Those who are a part of the spiritual, out of this world, Ek-kalassia dare not forget him.



X14- Saved

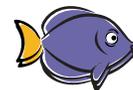
It was not over yet. Satan will not let the sinner go easily. Old habits die hard. No sooner did Christian in Pilgrim's Progress leave the city of destruction, than certain ones came after him to try and change his mind. The parable of the sower makes it very clear that many are called but few are chosen. Some seed is carried away by the ravens. Some seems to spring up quickly giving great promise, only to wither with the first hot sun. Others grow for a while, but then find they are no competition for the thorns that choke them to death.

Paul knew how it was. He said, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." This present world is a bed of thorns that will strangle the soul if we let it. I cannot argue for real or un-real salvations. I just know that Pharaoh still had his chariots. As the enemy marched after them (v.10) fear marched in them. "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" It was not their faith that saved them or us. It is only God's grace.

"Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying Let us alone..." This is the feeling of most sinners. "Leave us alone." Preachers, like Moses cannot "leave us alone." They are concerned for our souls. They must not only get us out of Africa, they must also get us to the promised land. Like Moses, they "must give an account" (Heb. 13:17).

Why does God allow such trials to come upon us? Why does he sometimes allow us to see the Egyptians marching heavy after us? The answer is partly found in Deuteronomy (8:2) "To humble thee, and to prove thee." There must be no mistake about who saved who. It is not our works. It is not the path we chose. It is not "turning over a new leaf." God will demonstrate, with the parting of the waters and the drowning of an entire army, that Salvation is something God does.

"Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD" Let all mankind stand still at the foot of mount Calvary. Let the whole world stand still and see the salvation of the LORD. As God divided the waters of the Red sea that day, so Jesus divides the world in two. There is belief and there is unbelief. Those on one side are destroyed. Those on the other, live forever.



X15-Sing

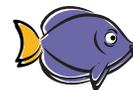
“Than sang Moses and the children of Israel this song...”

After the miracle there must be music. Saved people sing. If anyone has anything to sing about in this world, it is a believer. Moses and the children of Israel have been singing since they left Egypt. The most important thing about a song is the lyrics. God did not leave us the notes, the melody, or the rhythm of the song. But he did leave the lyrics. Lyrics are the most important. During these two thousand years since the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Church never stopped singing. The voices may change, but not the words. John the Baptist said he was just a voice crying in the wilderness. Herod could stay the voice but he could not stop the word. Satan cannot stop the song. When Paul and Silas were in the Philippian jail, they sang. We do not know what they sang, but from the warden’s question after the earthquake, we gather they must have been singing about Jesus and his great salvation.

All Israel stood in safety and salvation having witnessed the awesome spectacle and end of Pharaoh’s reign over them. They broke out in song. Notice what they sang about. They did not sing about themselves. The theme of their song was about the LORD and “unto the LORD.” Here is one of the great keys of spiritual music. “I will sing unto the LORD.” It goes against the grain when we hear in church “so and so will now sing for us.” Oh please, don’t bother. Neither we nor Israel by the sea cares to be entertained.

Moses complained to God he “could not speak,” but he sure could sing. He said “I will exalt him.” That is what worship is. Entertainment exalts the singer, or amuses the hearer. We need less of Hollywood, if more holy we would be.

God got all the glory that day. Israel saved from the brink, could not lay claim or take any credit for salvation. They sang of how God triumphed gloriously. They sang of his strength, they sang of his salvation, they sang of his power. There was no gloating, only glory to God. And so let us sing. Let us sing of Him. Let us sing for He (not We) has triumphed gloriously- the horse and rider have (along with all our sins) have been thrown into the sea.



X16-Gathering

They thought they would die of hunger and they had already begun to blame Moses. Both they and Moses were about to learn something of life, leadership, and the love of God. With God it matters not if five thousand or a million show up for dinner. He is always prepared. When Jesus asked Philip about buying bread to feed the hungry multitude, he did so (the Bible says) “to prove” his disciple. The Scriptures go on to say that Jesus “himself knew what he would do.” It is of great consolation to the followers of Jesus, that as they go through the wilderness of this world, the Lord both knows the way and is the Way.

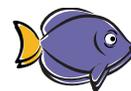
God was proving them. Where would they buy bread for so many? God knew what He would do. His answer was manna. The answer to man’s greatest needs, as always, comes from heaven.

Manna was a “small round thing.” Compared to the fancy dishes of Egypt, manna did not look like much. What manna was to Israel, the word of God is to us. The words of God looks like a plain and ordinary words. They look simple enough. Our English alphabet consists of 26 letters. They appear to look like any other words, but they are not. They have been thoughtfully arranged by the One who Himself was called the Eternal Word in such a way that they contain grace, and life, and power. They appear as simple ink on paper, but they are more than that. They are the very bread of heaven.

We must gather early as if our lives depended on it. These words are not for the stomach, they are for the soul. If we tarry, dawdle, or neglect to gather God’s gift before the heat of the day, or when the “sun waxed hot” somehow the spiritual potency “melts away” (v.21) and we are left with ink and paper. We must set to it in the morning as if our spiritual lives depended on it, for they do.

I must gather enough for the day. I have no idea what kind of day it will be. I know not how far I will be asked to walk today through this wilderness. I have no idea how difficult will be the journey.

I must gather only what I will use. It is foolish when saints gatherer on Sunday morning more than they will use. Trouble is we fill our heads and not our hearts. One is hiding, the other is hoarding. We are not to be hearers only, which are hoarders of the word, but doers of the word.



X17-Doubt

Then came Amalek

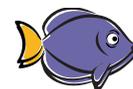
“Is the LORD among us, or not?” Worse than any Amalek is doubt. When we trusted Christ, when we set off following him out of Egypt we appeared victorious and triumphant. We witnessed the power and the grace of God. We sang with Moses the praises of God. Then came Amalek. Then came our doubts and fears.

Israel needed bread, but it also needed water. There appeared to be none. What pilgrim has not found himself, sooner or later, in the “dry place?” Elim is a memory. We left it chapters ago. Gone are the wells and the seventy palm trees. Now there is just heat. Now there is dryness. Who has not been there on their spiritual journey? Sooner or later some foe, some fiend, some fierce and terrible army will go out of their way to stop us.

If you have ever come to place of doubt or some very difficult circumstance and asked “Is the LORD among us, or not?” there is another question you must ask to find the answer. How did I get here? In the verse we are told how they came to Rephidim in the first place. This place where “there was no water for the people to drink,” was the place God brought them to by his command. “And all the congregation of the children of Israel journey from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD...” I need to ask, “am I following God’s commandments?” That is all I really need to know. Whether there is water waiting there or not is God’s business, mine is to obey.

God’s answer to their thirst was a cleft in a rock from which sprang water, water enough for all. When I come to that dry place I have but to look for the Rock Christ Jesus. He has already been smitten for us. He said “He who believes in me, out of his inner most being shall flow rivers of living water.” Spring up, Oh well.

Then there is the matter of Amalek. God never said it would be easy. God never said we would be unopposed when we follow his commandments. What He did say was that He would be our God and we would be his people. Watch as Moses holds the rod of God in the air, and Israel prevails. Watch what happens when he lowers his arms. See the tide of battle turn on our prayers. Joshua below engaging the enemy. Lift up holy hands and pray.



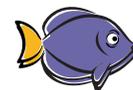
X18-Order

Jethro heard. In things of faith, we hear before we see. Jethro heard (v1). “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom. 10:17). That is the way it always is. The men of Sychar said “ Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.” (Jn. 4:42). First we hear about Him, then we like Jethro come to the place where we say “Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods, for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.” (vs. 11). Finally this priest of Midian came to faith. Moses had told him “all the LORD had done...” Not so much what Moses had done, but what God had done. Sometimes God gets lost in the testimony. Even in our testimonies we would do well to follow the example of the Baptist who said, “He must increase, I must decrease.”

Jethro “rejoiced for all the goodness” God had done. His heart was in harmony with the Spirit. The Psalmist said “the humble shall hear there of and be glad.” (Ps. 34). After this we find Jethro offering up “sacrifices” for God. Faith calls us to sacrifice. The life of faith is punctuated with altars. They are like the mile stones that mark our journey to heaven.

Jethro saw. Jethro saw the responsibility of spiritual leadership was too great for Moses. There could only be one Moses, but Moses was only one. Any other man may have resented being so soon reprimanded by one who have never experienced the bondage or the battle. Moses however, was the meekest man on earth (Num. 12:3). It takes wisdom to learn from those who are wiser and more than we. It takes grace and a spirit of meekness to learn from those who are less. “Thou shalt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou are not able to perform it thyself alone.” (v.18). Moses needed to share leadership.

The Apostles learned early that there was just too much to be done for them to do it alone. They ordained deacons. No flock is so little that one man alone can shepherd and meet all the needs. Thank God for the plurality of elders. Thank God for the multiplicity of gifts and the variety of vestments. Thank God for humble men who try not to Lord it over, but instead lead. Thank God for humble men who recognize their God-given gifts and do not try to be what they are not. Thank God for Moses. Thank God for Jethro. God is a God of order.



X19- Out of Egypt

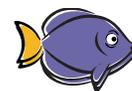
“Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself.” Ex. 19:4

Here we see the proof, the power, the purpose of our great deliverance.

1) The Proof. If you need proof, go to Egypt. Today’s Egypt is nothing when compared to what it was. Go to the Egypt of the Pharaoh’s. Remember the pride of the pyramids, but also remember the Plagues. Go to Egypt, see the funeral pyres of a million first-born sons, which were God’s final answer to a king who dared to ask “who is the LORD that I should obey him?” Go to Egypt and see the bodies of an awesome army washed up on Egypt’s shores. Israel remembers with every Passover. We too should remember from what God saved us. In our case however, we do not gaze upon the crushed sons of Egypt, instead we look on the crucified Son of God. Nothing can compare to that battle and that war, and the single casualty who willingly laid down his life for us. Jesus proved God’s love for us as well as God’s holiness on Calvary. Gaze on the cross and say with Paul “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14).

2) The Power. “eagle’s wings.” God compares himself to the most powerful bird. Soaring high upon the thermals is this mighty thing of God. There are two parts of the eagle, the hard and sharp part and the softer side. God does not make us feel the talons. We only know His tenderness. We do not know his claw or his rending beak. Only those who spurn his gentleness will know his judgment. We feel the feathers. “His gentleness,” said David “hath made me great.” Not only does God’s grace save us, it also carries us on “eagle’s wings.”

3) The Purpose. “to myself.” God did not deliver me for myself, but for Himself. Genuine grace brings us closer to God. God’s message to Pharaoh was “let my people go that they might serve me.” We are saved to serve. All things were made by Him and for Him. “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1Pet. 3:18).



X20-The Image

Egypt was the world's center of idolatry. Every person and family had a pantheon of gods, and each god had its idols. Men would make these gods after the image of animals and strange combinations of beast and human. There was the jackal, hippo, and falcon, scarab, cobra, and it went on and on. Temples were built everywhere, as were shrines and altars. Like the Greeks and Romans to come later, man has a tendency to make gods in his own image, and in the image those things that live in their hearts. If the religion of Egypt came out of the hearts of the Egyptians, it only proves what Jeremiah said about the heart of man, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" As the walls of Egyptian crypts are covered with grotesque images, so are the hearts of men who turn away from the true and only God. Ezekiel spoke of this "imagery" (Ezk. 8:12).

Israel has been saved from the gods of Egypt. Pharaoh himself claimed to be a god. Now Israel stood before the GOD who rescued them. What is God like? Is He like us? Is He like men? What does He look like?

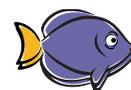
1) God is a Spirit- Those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Israel was warned to make "no similitude" or likeness of God (Deut 4:11). It is the second commandment.

What does God look like? God is light- but men love darkness. God is love. When the Apostles said, "we beheld his glory" they were speaking of Jesus who is the express image of the invisible God.

The Hebrews "saw the thundering, and the lightning, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed and stood afar off" (v. 18). But we see Jesus not in the "darkness" (v21) of the Old Testament world but in the brilliant radiance of "the Light of the world."

2) God is Truth. God is holy. No, He is not like us. The Israelites were told to "Touch not." Israel was commanded to come clean when they came (wash your clothes). We come clean also, but not by scrubbing our self, rather we are washed in the blood of the Lamb.

A glimpse of JEHOVAH made these people stand "afar off." One glimpse of Jesus with the eyes of faith beckons us to draw near.



X21-All

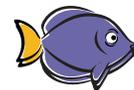
“thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart...” God wants us to be with him. He also wants us to love him. Grace is seen in “God [desiring to be] with us,” Immanuel. Faith is seen in our desiring to be “with God.” We have been bought with a price. We are not our own. We are free to leave. “Will you go away also?” Jesus asked the disciples when everyone else went away. “Where can we go? You have the words of life,” said Peter. Ruth said, “Wither thou goest, I will go.” And so a slave became a loving and willing servant of the master. God is delighted when we come to such a place of consecration. An awl was used to bore through the slave’s ear. The awl marked the day a man gave all to his master. The awl of consecration marks the day we give God our ear, and our all. In so doing he is saying “I love my master.” Ex. 21:5

The awl marked a moment of consecration. The slave’s ear was pierced through and affixed to the door of the master’s house. Before this the slave was free to go. Even though he may have been “bought with a price” he was free to leave. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. We are not in bondage. Some serve out of a sense of duty. They understand that they have been bought. They report to God for duty each day, but somehow their heart is not in it.

Then one day they come to the place where they understand and appreciate grace and they exchange law for love. They say, “I love my Master.” With that they mark themselves and the spot for life with an awl.

Yes, there is some pain involved in such a decision. Yes, there is some blood. But when compared to the pain and blood that purchased us, the cost of our consecration is nothing when compared to the cross of Christ.

I shall love the Lord thy God with Awl my heart, with Awl my mind, with Awl my soul, and with Awl my might.



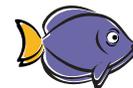
X 22- Good Neighbor

Every town has its ordinances. Ordinances are necessary where two or three gather together in any name. Without ordinances some men may allow their dogs to bark all night or throw garbage in the street. Robert Frost said fences make good neighbors. Likewise these judgments handed down to God's people help to establish the boundary lines of civil society. Without them there would be chaos.

“If a man steal an ox...” (v.1). Never mind that God had already made it clear, “thou shalt not steal (the sixth commandment), someone is going to steal. Someone is not going to care to keep the moral law in their own life and heart, and provision must be made for such. God is a God of order.

If a thief is found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall be no blood shed for him. However if the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him.” We shall be judged by the same standard. We shall be judged according to the amount of light we have been given. If in fear for one's life a thief is killed while breaking into our house in the night (when things are not clear) we shall be judged by the amount of light we had. If, on the other hand, we see clearly enough (if the sun be risen) then murder is worse than theft. Life is more valuable than property.

These ordinances basically boil down to one thing: respect. We are to have respect for life, for property, for reputation, for our own bodies and the dignity of others. All these would be reduced by Jesus into one word: love. And love has a golden standard. We should treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated.



X23-Living the Good Life

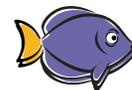
“Put not thy hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.” Believers are supposed to be different. Faith calls us to live in the light of a higher life. We are tabernacles. We are temples. If God fills our hearts the world cannot help but notice we travel to the beat of a different drum. We will be witnesses. Jesus said, “After that the Holy Spirit come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” We are witnesses. An unrighteous witness is worthless. No judge or jury will give any credence to his testimony. What we say, must be supported by integrity. “Thou shalt not raise a false report,” said Moses. The believer does not need to exaggerate, embellish, or stretch the truth. We are to be witnesses to the one who is the Truth.

The world needs to hear the credible testimony of a personal, and first hand account of the power and deliverance of God, and presented with the evidence of a transformed life. Moses warns God’s people about bribes, and the temptation to go along with the crowd of popular opinion and what he called the “multitude to do evil.” We are to be people of the Word. Someone said man should be as good as his word. Moses says, a man should be as good as God’s word. That is a tall order. If there is anything worse than an “unrighteous witness” it is a “self-righteous witness.” There is more hope for the “unrighteous” than for the “self-righteous.” There is more hope for the Publican than for the Pharisee, but with God, nothing is impossible.

There is a big difference between being sanctified and being sanctimonious. God deliver us from the latter.

After Salvation God begins his work of sanctification. In it he changes us from the inside out. We are called to live by holy standards. We are to be different from those who know not God. This work is not done in a moment. It is akin to taking over the promised land. God himself said that such a work is accomplished “little by little” (v. 30). It is not done in a year. God promised that he would drive out the enemy, but that we must not make any covenant with them.

Worse than the Hivite, Canaanite, and the Hittite, there are our old habits, our old appetites, our attitudes. God will overcome these with the power of His word as we determine to give no quarter, no place or succor to any that will not worship the All Holy
GOD who bought us with blood.



X24-Inspiration

“And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD.”

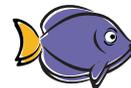
The world became richer that day. There was a time when the believer relied on oral tradition. Now they had God’s Word in writing. Now when Satan comes with his “hath God said?” we can point to a text. Now when tempted in the wilderness we can say like Jesus, “It is written.” How poor we would be without the Scriptures.

Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. It was the beginning. When the resurrected Savior spoke to the disappointed disciples on the way to Emmaus, the Bible says that “Beginning with Moses.” Moses is a good place to begin, because it was he who first wrote the words “In the beginning.”

Moses turned his back on Egypt’s gold and Egypt’s gods. Stephen tells us that Moses “was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.” (Acts 7:22). Literacy is a national treasure. Nothing Moses took out of Egypt was more valuable than this. He was able to write. Because he was able to write, we are able to read the very words of God. Many do not realize what riches we have in “all the words of the LORD.”

But Moses, said Stephen was mighty in words and in “deeds.” It is not enough to be a hearer we must also be a doer. The people answered “with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.” John said, “The Law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” The words written by Moses, could never save, but they point to a Savior. If read properly and obeyed, they will form a faith that calls for grace and recognizes the Truth when he comes and says, “no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” Moses wrote, not all, but many of the words. Each word he wrote looked forward to the day when the Word would become flesh, and it did in Christ Jesus.

Moses sprinkled the “blood of the covenant” on the people when he read to them the words of God. Jesus spoke of a “new covenant” and all who love him say, “All that you say will we do, and be obedient (v.7).



X25- Making Room

“Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell in” Ex. 25:8

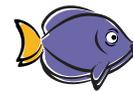
God provides a pattern and a parts list for the tabernacle. Included are things the Israelites carried out of Egypt when they spoiled the Egyptians. They did not come out empty handed. As the Roman Triumph a thousand years later displayed the riches and spoils of conquered nations through the streets of Rome, Jesus Christ “led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men” (Eph. 4:8). These Hebrew slaves, now free, were weighted down with riches which they gave “willingly” (v.2) for the construction of the Holy Tabernacle. Gold, silver and brass (copper), along with blue, purple and scarlet colored cloth, ram’s and badger skins, oils, spices, and precious and semi-precious stones are among the articles to be used in the Tabernacle. A closer look at these “articles” will reveal that they are actually “articles of faith.” Each one is a picture of something sacred in the life of the believer.

The most important of all, of course, is God. Take God out and all we are left with is a cold dead religion. Without God the Tabernacle is a pile of curtains, and curtain rods, silver sockets and acacia wood. “Make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.”

In medieval cathedrals stained glass windows were designed to work with the light. The sun penetrated them bringing the colors to life. In the cathedral, the light source is outside. With the Tabernacle the light source is inside. Take God out, and there is just darkness.

We should keep this in mind in life building as well as tabernacle building. Take God out of the home, and it is just a house. Take God out of the Church, and it is just a chapel. Take God out of the mind of man, and there is darkness. God’s desire is to dwell with us. This is what Immanuel means. “And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.”

May my heart be a sanctuary prepared according to the pattern of God’s word. Come in Lord Jesus, Come in.



X26-Making Arrangements

“Couple the tent together that it may be one.” 26:11

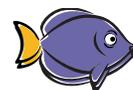
There was one Tabernacle. “Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12). The Tabernacle is a picture. It is a picture or a testimony of witness (Acts 7:44). It is a witness of the God of Salvation, the God who brought Israel out of Egypt. So too, the Church is to be a witness. “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the Earth (Acts 1:8).

Exodus 26 describes how the Tabernacle was to be “put together.” It involved golden tacks, loops and lengths of fine twined linen. It involved tenoned boards of acacia wood set in sockets of silver and held together with golden rings, ram skins dyed red and badger skins. They were instructed “And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was showed thee in the mount.” Notice there was only “one” tabernacle.

There was to be only one place to worship God. To be sure we know that that place is spiritual. Anyone with the right spirit can find it. It is neither in this mountain or in that, for God wishes that men would worship him in spirit and in truth. Israel, not many years later, would set up two competing centers of worship.

The church, it seems, has tripped over the same sin. There are a thousand “so called” tabernacles being “reared up” (v. 30). Peter made the same mistake on the mount (knowing not what he said) “let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, one for Elijah.” It seems that the church has problems bringing it all together.

While God told Moses where each item was to be (candlestick on the south side, and the table on the north side) there are many more things in our churches that we just cannot seem to agree upon and so we argue about the arrangement of minor pieces and doctrines forgetting that love for God and love for each other brings it altogether. “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being himself the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.” (Eph. 2:21-22).

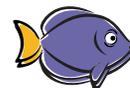


X27-The Cross

Of all the various parts and articles of the tabernacle, the first to greet anyone who entered the sacred court was the brazen altar. Like the cross, it is the first article of faith. This brazen altar (as the word altar from the Hebrew “zaba” means) was a place of “slaughter” for sacrifice. It was a bloody place even when all the precautions were taken to control the crimson flow. The force and flow of blood from a severed artery is dramatic. The blood was to be captured into basins and then sprinkled over the altar itself and its horns which spoke of the authority and power of God. Tied to bronze grating, a startled and frightened animal would strain and struggle against the cords as its very life drained away. Then it would be cut up and burned as the smoke would billow up and rise into the heavens. Its ashes were gathered up and carried off to a special place. The fact could not be lost on any witness to the spectacle that “The wages of sin is death.”

No one could enter the heart of the tabernacle until he first passed the altar. So too, no one can approach a Holy and Awesome God except by way of the cross. The way of the cross leads home. The sacrifice that took place on that brazen altar was dramatic, determinate, and divine. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but quickened by the Spirit.” (1Pet. 3:18). It does no good to try to understand the tapestry, the candlestick, the table of show bread until one understands the brazen altar. It is no use to try to understand the life or the lessons of Christ until you understand his death.

The brazen or brass altar speaks of Judgment. First we must deal with sin. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. The life of the flesh is in the blood. So there on a hill, an elevated place, outside of Jerusalem, the Lamb of God was sacrificed on the altar of altars, the old rugged cross, to pay the price for our sins and make it possible for us to enter in and draw nigh unto God, “within the veil” (Ex. 27:21; Lk. 23:45; Heb. 9:1-12)

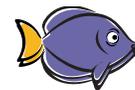


X28- For Glory and for Beauty

God was concerned that his priest, his high priest, have garments. They were designed for “glory and for beauty.” We, of course, have our High Priest, the Lord Jesus, and he too is clothed in Glory and in Beauty. The Lord of Life himself, who wore an eternal splendor that can not be described by words, for a few brief years laid aside his garments and draped himself with our humanity. While he never laid down his deity, Isaiah tells us that there was no “beauty” in him that we should desire him. And as for glory, it was hidden beneath a human veil and only briefly exposed for a moment on the mount of Transfiguration.

As if the humbleness of being fashioned as a man was not enough, we are told he laid aside his outer garment in the upper room and gird himself with a towel when he washed the disciple’s feet. And if that was not humble enough, he was draped by Roman soldiers for their sport in mock regal splendor, but even in the face of the weapons of humiliation he wore his dignity well, and opened not his mouth.

Finally and lower still, he was stripped of all and nailed to a cross where he wore something worse, he wore my sin and my shame. How broken I am to see him stripped of the “glory and beauty” that was rightfully his and dressed in such filthy rags that were mine. Isaiah tells us that the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all. “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” But Paul goes on “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” Oh, what “Glory;” Oh, what “Beauty.”



X29-Hallow

After being appointed, Aaron must be anointed. It is one thing to hold a position, it is another to have the power. Having clerical robes and having the proper wardrobe does not the man make. The office is one thing, the person is another. The person must live up to his potential. We too must walk worthy of the vocation where with we are called. It is one thing to be skilled, it is another thing to be filled. May those who serve in the Church of Jesus Christ be both.

“Hallow them.” It was the command of God. The Priesthood began as hallow. By the time Jesus visited the temple, it was hollow (Mt. 23). What a disappointment it is when children ask for bread and receive a stone. What a disappointment it is when sinners hunger and thirst after something for their spirit and find the church preoccupied with the flesh. Pot Luck suppers has replaced the Lord’s Supper, and tea parties have replaced tears for the lost. It was never meant to be so.

“Hallow them.” To be sure, only God can forgive sin and make us holy, clean and accepted in the beloved. God is not asking us to do what only he can do. This call to holiness is a call to consecration. We have a song about it that goes like this: “I am thine, Oh Lord, I have heard thy voice...” Jesus knew what that meant. David knew Ps. 40:8 “I delight to do thy will O God.” Moses did not forget God’s message to Pharaoh. “Let my people go, that they might serve me.” A large part of “so called” Christianity seems to have lost the second part of that text. It is clear. We are saved to serve.

“To minister unto me in the priest’s office.” God has an office for everyone. God has given gifts unto men. Each office can be a hallowed office. Moses and Aaron each had different gifts and offices. Aaron dare not try to be Moses. Moses knew he was no Aaron. When the two of them worked together it was wonderful. Aaron had the eloquence, Moses had the Word. These gifted men worked together. It is wonderful when the saints “work together.” In Psalm 133 we have a beautiful picture of Aaron appointed and anointed and the result being everything connected by a oil of gladness and unity. We must let God do both the appointing and the anointing. When God gives wise men a gift, he will also lead them to a manger or a ministry where they will gladly offer it up as a spiritual service. No sooner does one give up the thing, but what God fills the hand with another. If God brings you to the place of service or sacrifice, he will also pour out on you his grace, and no matter what task, be it motherhood or brotherhood, it is something sacred.



X30-Smoke Rise

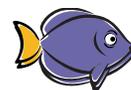
It rose from the altar of incense which sat before the veil and the ark of the testimony. It was as close as a the priest could get to the holy of holies. It was in the heart of the tabernacle. That is where prayer must be in the assembly and in our personal life, in the center and rising from the heart. Morning and evening a specially prepared and sacred incense was placed on this table of prayer. From its golden surface sweet smelling smoke would rise up from the holy place to the heavens.

The word incense means a burning or a fuming. In order for incense to work it must burn. Cold prayers are not prayers at all. Real prayer must be on fire. On the way to the table of incense a priest must stop at the brazen altar where he would borrow a burning coal and carry it into the center of the sanctuary. Then he would gently blow or pour the consecrated compound made of the ingredients listed in Exodus 30. The recipe is obscure enough and comes with a warning not to manufacture or make merchandise of God's holy things.

No thing in the modern assembly is more important, sacred, or centermost than this now invisible altar of incense, prayer. The ancient formula included stacte, onycha, galbanum and pure frankincense, which are called "sweet spices." Today the most important, significant, and sweetest ingredient of prayer is my Savior's name. Jesus is the sweetest name I know.

Jesus called the temple a "house of prayer." Never was our Savior more "incensed" then when he found it to be otherwise and to find that man had made his Father's house into a den of thieves.

Not only were they stealing from the people, and making merchandise of holy things, they were stealing from God the glory he deserves, and worship which he desires in spirit and in truth. If God placed prayer in the heart of the tabernacle, and prayer is so dear to the heart of God, why is this altar so hard to find in our meetings and ministry? Why do so many of those who say they believe in the "priesthood of believers" fail to take their place beside this golden thing? And when prayers are offered, where is the warmth, the heat, the fire? We need not wait for others to answer. We each may and must come to the sacred inner sanctum of prayer and witness a smoke rise of a glowing and grateful heart.



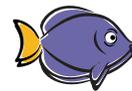
X31-Craftsmanship

Bezaleel was a craftsman. God's work calls for skill, and God called Bezaleel by name. God knows our names. Zacchaeus should not have been surprised when Jesus called him to come down from that sycamore tree. He wanted that publican to "abide" with him. The tabernacle was to be an abiding place also. God wants to abide with us. After we get over the initial shock of such an incredible thing as justification and the fact that we shall one day (for sure) "abide with him," we then must see that there is much work to be done in sanctification, if God should "abide with us." Isaiah would later write, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide in the shadow of the Almighty." Bezaleel means "in the shadow of God."

Bezaleel must have started out as a simple apprentice somewhere, by his father's side, no doubt. One does not become a master craftsman overnight. So it is with all holy work. "Study to show thyself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Whether in the martial arts or in the ministry, discipleship requires discipline and hard work. One must first labor learning and playing the scales before performing at the concert.

Notice that this special work required many materials, some common, some precious. There was gold and silver and bronze. There was wood, stone, and cloth. No life is all gold. God's coats are of many colors. Some beautiful things in the tabernacle would require skill in wood, others is forging brass for the brazen altar, and others required the dexterity and delicate touch of a gold smith in making the crown for the table of incense. We are all called to make the most of the good God gave us. Likewise we need to know when it is best to cut across and when it is best to work with the grain of the acacia wood.

Bezaleel was "filled with the Spirit." There is no sacred work we will ever do until we know what it is to be the same.



X32-Playing

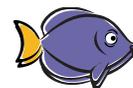
“And they rose up early on the morrow...and they rose up to play.” (Ex.32:6). There are still a lot of people playing church. They may even rise up early every Sunday and bring their offerings, but all the excitement is about what they have made and what they have done. Golden calves make few demands on us. Golden calves reflect our experience, or imagination, or desires, not God’s. Golden calves provide millions with a false assurance that everything is all right. “Make us gods, which shall go before us,” they told Aaron.

Egypt was the author of a million idols. While faith is content with the substance of things hoped for and is satisfied with things yet unseen, religion and idolatry demand an idol or an icon. The crypts and tombs of Egypt are covered with grotesque images of their gods “so-called.” God is immortal and invisible. He defies all attempts to fashion or make images of him. He prohibits such attempts with the second commandment.

God is a Spirit. People cannot manufacture and market a Spirit. That is why religion prefers crosses, and relics, rosaries, and Saint Christophers. Money can be made by selling images of Dianna the goddess of Ephesus, or little plastic Jesus’ to put on our dashboards.

The only tangible image or evidence of the presence of the Almighty and invisible God was light and the glory cloud. These elements along with the thunder and smoke that enveloped Mt. Sinai defy men who would attempt to tinker with God’s image.

The image God would give his people was a moral one. The ten commandments simply inscribe what the conscience knew all along and the standard of holiness was much higher than Sinai itself. It was as high as heaven. There was no man alive that could keep the whole or keep it forever. One, and one only has done so. That is the Lord Jesus Christ. He fulfilled the law and he fulfilled it forever.



X 33-Glory

“LORD, show me thy glory.” Moses wanted this more than anything else. Instead he saw ingratitude and idolatry. To make things worse, he received some very bad news. God said, he was not going with these “stiff-necked” people. Moses called it “evil tidings,” and it was. We can think of nothing worse than being in this world, without God. That is how the Ephesians were described in (Eph. 2:12) before they came to faith.

As if to press home the seriousness of their transgression involving the incident of the golden calf, all Israel stripped themselves of all their “ornaments.” Accessorizing and the wearing of jewelry and cosmetics has always been a delicate and “touchy” subject within the church. How should an eternal soul, plucked from the fire, rescued from Egypt, bought with so great a price, accessorize? What are the ornaments that should be worn, by those who have been saved by grace? Or as Moses asked God, “How shall it be known to the people of the world that we have been found and touched by grace, and have been separated unto you?” (Ex.33:16 *paraphrase*). The answer, of course, is God’s presence. The ornaments of grace are a meek and quiet spirit (1Pet. 3:4).

It is disappointing that so many settle for less. Many would more rather have God’s presents than his presence. Some would have been satisfied with an angel, or with a miracle, or with the tabernacle. Moses wanted more. The tabernacle, without God, is just a tent. The assembly, without God, is just a social club.

Ornaments on the hood of an automobile, or dangling from our bodies often calls attention to our glory. The Super Bowl ring, or the college class ring, or the kind of car we drive, or the watch we wear says a lot more about our glory than God’s. Moses knew nothing about the so-called “Prosperity Gospel.” He gave up everything when he forsook Egypt, and I can’t imagine him or the Apostle Paul being proud of their class ring.

Moses was only interested in God’s glory. What does it look like? Would we recognize it if we saw it? It is God’s goodness. “Let your light so shine before men,” said Jesus, “that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” The Psalmist understood this as well. “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.” (Ps. 115:1).



X34-Stand by Me

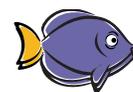
The LORD descended and stood with him there. What condescension. The Christian life is seen in two words: “with him.” Here is Emmanuel, “God with us.” Here is a fellowship, here is a partnership. This is what God wanted all along. Moses finds himself alone with God on the top of Mt. Sinai. It was what God wanted. “Present thyself there to me.” A spiritual life is ultimately a personal thing. Souls are saved and sanctified, one by one.

Then God speaks his own name and describes himself. This is a rare and amazing thing. It is one thing for us to attempt to describe God by his attributes, it is quite another when God tells us who and what he is like. He calls himself the Merciful, the Gracious, the Longsuffering One. He speaks of his abundant goodness and calls himself the truth. Many who have attempted to paint the God of Mt. Sinai seldom use these bright colors. Those who don’t really know him dip their brushes in darker hues. The God of the New Testament is the God of Moses.

The book of Hebrews says that while God spoke in times past through the prophets, in these last days he has spoken to us by the Son. The Word became flesh. Fifteen hundred years after Sinai, Moses is once again standing with God on a mountain top, the mountain of transfiguration. There, Jesus talks with both Moses and Elijah about greater Exodus.

Jesus is Merciful, Gracious, Longsuffering, abundant in Goodness and he called himself the Truth.

Moses fell down and worshiped God when God so revealed himself. Likewise, anyone who see the Son in all his glory cannot help but fall down at his feet in praise and adoration. “And this is life eternal, that men might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (Jn. 17:3). When he rose up he was transfigured. His face held the light, he was unconsciously radiant. He was unaware, others were not. Others can tell the difference when a man has been alone in God’s presence. Shine, Jesus Shine!



X35- Putting it all together

At last everything was coming together. The Tabernacle was taking shape. Moses gathered all the congregation...together. The thing that makes a church a church is the Lord gathering us together. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Here is grace at work. It is grace that any in included in this divine "together." Second it is nothing less than a miracle that we are "together" while being so different. From the four corners of the earth, out of every kindred, tribe, and nation, we are together in Christ.

Church building, tabernacle building, family or home building all have something in common. They require God's will and good will. "These are the words which the LORD hath commanded, that ye should do them." God provided the plans and blueprints for the tabernacle. Everything was to follow the pattern. Commandments are not suggestions. Everything must be according to God's will. The second necessity was good will. Tabernacle building calls for people with a "willing heart" (v. 5). The work called for all whose "spirit was made willing." These are the only things we need to make things work. No marriage, business, assembly, or home will work without having both. First we must discover God's will. Then we must do his will with a willing heart.

The difference between the Prodigal Son and the elder brother is evident. One, after seeing his folly said, "I will arise and go to my father." The other angry and sullen at the news of his brother's return, and invitation to join the celebration "would not" go in. One was willing, one was not. One said, "I will," the other said, "I won't." Hell is filled with those who refused to be saved, those who said "I will not."

The tabernacle was beautiful. It is always beautiful to see God's will and good will come together.



X36- Too Much

Jesus once asked his disciples, all who had forsaken everything to follow him, “have you lacked anything?” (Lk. 22:35). The answer for all who have set out determined to do God’s will is always the same, “nothing.” God has promised to supply all our needs.

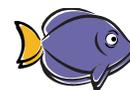
Here a nation of one-time slaves have brought free will offerings every morning for the construction of the tabernacle. Finally Bezaleel said, “the people bring much more than enough.” God’s work done God’s way will never go begging. The people gave, and they gave willingly.

First God stirred up the hearts of the workmen. Paul used the word when he spoke to Timothy “Stir up the gift that is in thee” (2Tim. 1:6). The word means to “re-ignite.” Sometimes even the hottest fires need a poker to move the logs. Sometimes the most devoted and skilled of saints need to be “stirred” by God. The Holy Spirit uses the Word to stir our souls each morning. He stirs up the coals. A very similar word is used in another place in the New Testament which comes from the word *seio*. We see it in our word seismograph. Jesus was accused by the Jews of “stirring up” the people (Lk. 23:5). Oh, to God that he would stir us up, again and again.

“And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it.”

When God is working the work get done, and there is always more than enough. When the disciples finished feeding the five thousand with bread and fish that they did not have, they found they had baskets of “leftovers.”

Jesus said, “Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” (Lk. 6:38).



X37- A Man Who Had it Made

some people talk about “having it made.” One might say that Bezaleel “had it made.” Of course the sinner means one thing and the saint another. Everyone who does what God asks, everyone who obeys God’s word, everyone who is obedient, has it made, or is in the middle of making it.

To a sinner Chapter 37 of Exodus seems redundant. To some it is tedious. The same description is given in chapter 30, they say. Let’s move on. Well, there is a big difference between chapter 30 and chapter 37. One is for the hearer the, other is for the doer. In 37 it is done. “And Bezaleel made the ark...”

The Tabernacle is a wordless book that speaks of Jesus Christ. We see here his Suffering and Sacrifice at the Altar. We see his holy life, love and light in the inner holy place. We see the atonement, Grace and Mercy before the Ark in the Holy of Holies. Every thread and every tack, every gold or silver socket speak of Him.

In Jesus, “I have it made.” The thing is done. Jesus said, “It is finished.” The giving of himself, the sacrifice, the blood, the brazen altar of Calvary, it is done. The darkness, the descending into hell, the hurt and the humiliation, done. The payment for sin, the sacrifice, finished. The atonement, the propitiation, the pardon, complete. I have it made, but I did not make it. He did. Jesus is the first and final word. He is the Alpha and Omega. I have it made in him.

The tabernacle was a wordless book, so too in a sense “Us in Christ, and Christ in us” is a wordless book, open before the world for everyone to read. May men see Christ in us, our only hope of glory. May they see his love for us. May they see our love for him.

May we see the Word become flesh. May we not be satisfied to receive the recipe in Chapter 30 and be hearers only. May we, like Bezaleel live in the shadow of the God setting our body, soul, and spirits to do what God has asked us to do. Whenever we find a man who had done what God has asked of him, we can say “he has it made.”



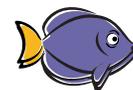
X38-Lookingglasses

We are often too concerned about how we look. We should never forget ourselves to the point that we forget that we are ambassadors. Ambassadors need to be presentable, but an ambassador never forget the king. As far as looking goes, we realize the “man looketh on the outward appearance,” but “God looketh on the heart.” We should be obsessed with Christ, not with ourselves. A saint glances at self, before gazing at the Savior. The hymns says it well when speaking of Jesus, “The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegrooms face...”

The laver of the tabernacle was forged from the melted lookingglasses of the women assembling. How much time is wasted was women ready for worship these days. Hours are spent in the beauty parlor, millions of dollars are spent on “looking good.” Imagine all the minutes spent looking at self on Sunday morning, and how little time is spent looking on Him.

For a few brief moments in the beginning of our Bibles, when God was making a peculiar people the women were caught in the spirit of Jesus who said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.” The melted mirrors we a testimonial to this self-denial, even if but for a moment.

The Bible is called by James a looking glass. A mirror allows us to see our “natural face.” God’s word allows us to both see our inner man, and our real face. Looking glasses are of little use to men on the way to the gallows. Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ, never the less I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave his life for me.” If he gave his life for me, what am I willing to give to him? A laver is a vessel. My life is his to melt down and make into anything he should choose.



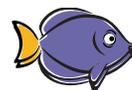
X39 Designer Label

It is one thing to wear the Miter it is another thing to wear God's might. The high priest supposed to wear both. We know the strength of God in holiness. History knows full well how men fight over crowns. It is not unusual for crowns to be made of gold. Every man knows that there is power in the gold. It is evil's golden rule. The man with the most gold rules. How foolish. Real power, real authority is in righteousness. The engravings held the secret. It said, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD."

Once, when a poor woman with an issue of blood touched the hem of Christ's garment, the Bible says, "power" went out of him. The hem of his garment was not as beautiful as the one worn by the High Priest, but it was filled with virtue. The priests had long ago lost God's power. They had a "form of godliness, denying the power thereof." Jesus said, "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Jesus alone had power to forgive sins. Caiaphas wore the garment, but he crucified the Christ. Every thread, every strand, every color and precious stone of the garment he wore spoke of Jesus, and yet his heart was harder than any Pharaoh that ever lived.

The word declared one thing the life another, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." Salvation is a high and holy calling. Hypocrisy, the opposite of holiness, is the lowest life. How often do we fail to live up to the inscription, Holiness? How often do we don miter without the might? How often do we forget what we are saved from, or what we are saved for?

When the Prodigal came home the father said, "put the best robe on him." We wear the best robes. We are a kingdom of kings and priests. No garments are more beautiful than the garments of salvation which were made on the looms of heaven and purchased for us in love, and at so great a price.



X40- Finished?

“What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1Cor. 6:19).

As we stand in awe of the ancient tabernacle and are filled with wonder, let us not lose sight of the fact that today, God does not dwell in temples made with hands. Bazaleel did a wonderful job. Bazaleel means in the shadow of God. All these things are shadows (Col. 2:17) of things to come.

When Jesus uttered the words on the cross, “It is finished,” all these things were finished. No more need the lambs be slain for the LAMB was slain. No more blood, no more death, no more thunder. Jesus is both the Lamb and the High Priest. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the fulfillment of all the Law and the prophets. Jesus is our Sabbath and our Passover. He is our Friend and God’s Final Word.

When the tabernacle was at last set up the cloud embraced and filled it. Paul prayed that the church too might know this embrace and this filling. “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.”

We are saved. Egypt is in the past. We are on our way through this wildness headed for the promised land. As we go, and along the way, we pray that many will join us. The invitation of Christ is to every tribe and every nation. No one needs to stay in Egypt. And with Heaven so large, no one needs to go to Hell. The message is still valid today, “Thus saith the LORD, let my people go, that they may serve me.” Serve Him today. Serve Him forever. On, on to the Promised Land!

