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INDEX TO SERMONS BELOW ALL BY ROB MORGAN

- [Exodus 3 The Angel in the Bush](#) (see on site discussion of Angel of the LORD)
- [Exodus 6,12 Exit Lane](#)
- [Exodus Series A Prophet Like Me \(Deuteronomy 18:15\)](#)
- [Exodus 12 Meeting God at Midnight](#)
- [Exodus 14:1-2 Betwixt The Sword And The Sea](#)
- [Exodus 14:19-20 Envision The Enveloping God](#)
- [Exodus 14:5-9 Strong Enemy. Stronger Ally](#)
- [Exodus 14:15 Taking The Next Step](#)
- [Exodus 14 Under the Cloud](#)
- [Exodus 14 Help Lord!](#)
- [Exodus 14 God's Specialty](#)
- [Exodus 14:13 Leave Room For God](#)
- [Exodus 14,15 Asking The Right Question](#)
- [Exodus 14:26-29,15 Faith-Building By The Sea Shore](#)
- [Exodus 14,15 Don't Forget To Praise Him](#)
- [Exodus 15 The Lord Showed Him a Tree](#)
- [Exodus 16 What is It?](#)
- [Exodus 17 Streams in the Desert](#)
- [Exodus 24 - The Promptable Heart](#)
- [Exodus 25. et al: That I May Dwell Among You](#)
- [Exodus 25. The Heavenly Tabernacle](#)
- [Exodus 27 Curtains and Colors](#)
- [Exodus 29 The Altar of Bronze](#)
- [Exodus 30:17-21: The Bronze Laver](#)
- [Exodus 30:1-9, 37:10-16 Inside the Tabernacle - Christ: Our Sufficiency](#)
- [Exodus 25 The Raiders of the Lost Ark Meet The Perfect Storm](#)
- [Exodus 28 Man In The Middle](#)
- [Exodus 28, 39 Dress Rehearsal: What The High Priestly Garments of Aaron Tell Us About Christ](#)
- [Exodus 28, 39 Dress Rehearsal: What The High Priestly Garments of Aaron Tell Us About Christ - Part 2](#)
- [Exodus 40 - The Heavenly Tent](#)

Exodus 3:1-12 The Angel In The Bush Rob Morgan

Today we are continuing our studies on the subject of Christ in the book of Exodus, and our text from Exodus 3:1-12 is the story of

Moses encountering God at the burning bush.

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Median. And he led the flock to the back of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of the bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."

So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground."

Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

And the Lord said, "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from the land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

Just as a law professor might hold up a legal brief and ask his class what could be learned about the judicial system from the documents in his hand...

As a doctor might discover a great deal about the state of your health from a sample of your blood...

As an astronomer might learn about the heavens by fixing his telescope on one star...

Even so, we might learn a great deal about Jesus Christ from a study of this one passage. It was written by Moses, the author of the first five books of the Bible. In Luke 24:44-48, Jesus, speaking to his two wayfaring friends, explained to them what the Old Testament had to say about the Messiah, and he began with the books of Moses. In other words, the Bible, from its beginning books, is all about Jesus Christ. He fills the pages of Genesis and Exodus.

So, what can we learn about Jesus Christ from this passage? The answer to that question comes when we begin to establish the identity of the one who is speaking, the one here who is called the "Angel of the Lord." Ex 3:2 says, "And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of the bush." Who was this angel?

Well, we have several clues. First, it's important to remember that the word angel means messenger. So we could say that there was a messenger from God who appeared in the form of a crackling, blazing fire in this bush. He was a messenger of God the Father whose purpose was to reveal the thoughts and intentions of God the Father to a human being, to Moses.

The second clue is hardly a clue at all, for it is so obvious. Whoever is speaking, this Angel or Messenger of God, is, in fact, God Himself. Look at Ex 3:4: So when the Lord saw that he (Moses) turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses! Moses!" And down in Ex 3:6: I am the God of your fathers. Moses confirmed this fact later, for Deuteronomy 33:16 gives us an interesting name for God, referring to the Lord as "Him who dwelt in the bush."

So we have God the Messenger speaking for God the Father from the burning bush. Our third clue comes to us as we compare this text with previous passages in the Bible where this "Angel of the Lord" shows up. In Genesis, for example, he appears to several people at different times and with different messages. You might remember that one day in Genesis 18 Abraham is sitting in the door of his tent during the heat of the day when suddenly three mysterious travelers show up. Two are angels who proceed to Sodom to rescue Lot and to destroy the city. The other is called "the Angel of the Lord" who converses with Abraham face to face, man to man, and he is referred to in the text as the Lord Himself. Abraham offers to him the first intercessory prayer in Scripture, praying for the people of Sodom. Later, in Genesis 32, this same "Angel of the Lord" confronts Jacob in the desert and wrestles with him until the break of day. In every case, the figure seems to be divine.

So here are our clues.

- He is a Messenger for God.
- Yet He is God Himself.
- He appears repeatedly in the Old Testament to communicate with human beings like you and me.

Now, the Bible teaches that there is one God who eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God the Father is invisible. No one has seen God the Father at any time. And nowhere in the Bible did anyone ever see the Holy Spirit except in symbolic form such as the dove that descended from the sky at the baptism of Christ, because, being Spirit, He, too, is invisible. But several verses in the New Testament tell us which member of the Holy Trinity reveals or manifests God to mankind:

John 1:18 says, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has (revealed) him."

John 6:46 - "No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father."

1 Timothy 6:16 says, "God... dwells in unapproachable light whom no man has seen or can see."

Colossians 1:15 says that he—Jesus Christ—is the image of the invisible God.

For 2000 years, church theologians have understood that when God appeared in human form in the Old Testament, it was a manifestation of God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. Dr. Raymond Scott in his book on this subject, wrote: "It is a well-known fact that the Old Testament predicts the coming of the Messiah. But what is not common knowledge among Christians is that Jesus Christ actually appeared on this earth on numerous occasions prior to his incarnation."

So I would like to suggest that when God appears as "the Angel of the Lord" in the burning bush was no one less than God the Son Himself.

The Symbol of the Bush

Now another question: Why does he appear in this way, as fire in the midst of the bush? What is the meaning or significance of this symbol? I want to suggest four possibilities.

First, it is possible that there is no deeper meaning to it at all. God just wanted to draw Moses aside to speak with him, and this was the way He chose to do it.

But some people suggest that God chose to appear in a burning bush because it is a picture of the nation of Israel, forever going through suffering, forever going through fire, yet never consumed. The people of the Jews, the nation of Israel, are indestructible. No matter how Pharaoh may try to subdue them, no matter how Haman the Agagite may plot to annihilate them, no matter how Antiochus Epiphanes may try to exterminate them, no matter how Adolf Hitler may seek to obliterate them, no matter how the coming Anti-Christ may seek to utterly destroy them, the Jewish people are indestructible. They will never be consumed by the fires of persecution.

There is a third possibility as well. In the Hebrew language, the word used here for bush means a thorny bush. We know from the book of Genesis that thorns and briars were a part of the curse. In Genesis 3:17, God cursed the ground because of the sin of Adam and Eve and said, "It will produce thorns and thistles for you." Fire, on the other hand, is also a biblical symbol, not only of holiness, but of judgment. Fire, in the Bible, is associated with hell. The Bible says that Jesus Christ became sin for us, and on the cross he faced the fires of God's justice in our place, yet was not consumed. He rose from the dead on the third day. Perhaps we have here a symbolic portrayal of the Gospel.

A fourth possibility is that the fire which Moses saw represented nothing more nor less than the holiness of God. Fire, in the Bible, is a symbol of purity and holiness. The book of Hebrews says that our God is a consuming fire. And this interpretation is born out by the context. Look at verses 4ff: When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

God The Son is Holy

And this is the first of four truths about Jesus Christ I want to share with you this morning. God the Son is Holy. Why did he tell Moses to remove his sandals? John MacArthur suggests that this command prevented Moses from rashly intruding, unprepared, into God's presence. The word holy means, among other things, without sin, pure. And we cannot be very healthy people until we begin to understand this aspect of our Lord's character.

Isaiah 6 gives us an interesting scene about this. One day the prophet Isaiah was going about his normal activities when suddenly he was given a vision of the magnificent holiness of God. He saw the Lord high and lifted up and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were the angels, singing: Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory. At the sound of their voices the building shook and the temple was filled with smoke. And what did Isaiah do? He fell on his face, crying, "Woe is me! I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

A. W. Tozer once wrote that we have too much learned to live with unholiness. We have too much learned to tolerate sin in our lives. But God hates sin like a mother hates the polio that would take the life of her child. And he says to us, "Be holy, for I am holy."

Tozer said, "God is holy and He has made holiness the moral condition necessary to the health of his universe. Whatever is holy is healthy; evil is a moral sickness that must ultimately end in death. The formation of the language itself suggests this, the English word holy deriving from the Anglo-Saxon halig, hal, meaning well, whole."

I want to say to everyone of you: "By the grace of Jesus Christ, keep yourselves pure. Separate yourselves from anyone or anything that would defile you. Come out from among them and be ye separate, says the Lord."

God the Son is Eternal

Second, we learn from this account in Exodus 3 that God the Son is Eternal. Read on: Then He said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

God the Son spoke these words, and 1500 years later God the Son interpreted them to the Sadducees. In Mark 12, a delegation from the denomination of the Sadducees came to see Jesus. They didn't believe in eternal life or in heaven, and they asked Jesus a convoluted question about the afterlife. Jesus told them bluntly that they were in error because they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (Mk 12:24). Then he said: But about the dead rising—have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He is not the God of the dead but of the living.

In other words, Jesus told the Sadducees to notice the tense of the verb used in Exodus 3. The voice from the burning bush did not say, "I WAS the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He said, "I AM the God of your father, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (Mk 12:25-26) Present tense. Moses, your father is alive right now. Abraham is alive, Isaac is alive, Jacob is alive. They are alive in heaven, and I am their God just as I was their God when they were on the earth. I am not the God of the dead, but of the living.

We do not realize how alive someone is the moment they die! When the Christian dies, he goes instantly to be with the Lord Jesus, for the Bible says that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

God the Son is Concerned

Now, there's a third thing we can learn here about God the Son. He is not only holy and eternal; He is concerned for us. Look at Ex 3:7: I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of the land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

I have heard their cries. I am concerned about their suffering. I am coming down to rescue them. I will deliver them and I will rescue them. Perhaps you wonder sometimes if God knows what you are going through. Sometimes in suffering we feel very alone. Sometimes we don't think anyone else can really understand, or that anyone else can help. But there's an old song that says:

Never a trial that He is not there,
Never a burden that He does not bear,
Never a sorrow that He does not share,
Moment by moment I'm under His care.

Never a heartache and never a groan
Never a teardrop and never a moan,
Never a danger but there on the throne,
Moment by moment He thinks of His own.

God The Son is Before Us and Behind Us
([Moment by Moment](#))

But now I'd like to show you one other thing about this "Angel of the Lord." We see him here in Exodus 3 in the form of the burning bush. But he shows up again later as a column of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day, leading Israel through the wilderness. Exodus 13:20-22 says, So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light...

Exodus 14:19 says: And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved on and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other.

How do you think the Israelites should have slept that night? The Angel of the Lord hemmed them in, behind and before. He surrounded them. He encompassed them.

Now compare that with these following verses:

Psalm 139:5 says: You hem me in—behind and before.

Isaiah 52:12 says: But you will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the Lord will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

Psalm 34:7 says: The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.

Psalm 5:12 says that God surrounds His people as with a shield.

We're surrounded! When we are in the center of God's will, when we are hidden in Christ, we have the Lord going before us, guiding us, and we have Him behind us, guarding us. The Eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

So who is this "**Angel of the LORD**" who spoke to Moses from the burning bush? Who is this "Angel of the Lord" who appeared in the pillar of fire and in the cloud of glory? It is God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is holy, who is eternal, who is vitally concerned about you, and who hems you in—behind and before—and surrounds your life as with a shield.

That's our God. That's our Jesus.

Exodus 6:6-9 Exit Lane

Rob Morgan

Therefore say to the Israelites: "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord (Exodus 6:6-9).

Last Friday night, 391 passengers boarded British Airways Flight 289 bound for London. The plane took off without incident and at first everything seemed to go smoothly. But about three hours after take off, a voice came over the PA system. It said: Attention. Attention. This is an emergency announcement. I repeat, this is an emergency announcement. It may shortly be necessary to make an emergency landing on water. You must listen carefully to the following instructions... The message went on to warn the passengers to brace for immediate impact over water.

As it turned out, it was all a mistake. Someone had inadvertently pushed a button that set off that particular pre-recorded message; but you can imagine the terror that swept through the cabin as men, women, and children were suddenly told they had perhaps only a few moments to live. Even after the pilots assured and reassured the passengers that the recording had been erroneously played, doctors aboard the plane were treating people for anxiety attacks. One passenger said, "To be told you're about to die is not a pleasant experience."

We are all on board a spinning planet, flying through space at a high rate of speed, and we all have a rendezvous with death. But God has given us a pre-recorded announcement in his word: I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death (Hosea 13:14)

Job said: I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God (Job 19:26).

Colossians 1:14-15 says: He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Romans 3:23 says: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Psalms 111:9 says, He provided redemption for his people.

Both the Old and the New Testaments emphasize the theme of redemption, and nowhere does that theme emerge quite as colorfully as in the book of Exodus. Arthur Pink, the Bible scholar, once wrote: "The central doctrine of the book of Exodus is redemption, but this is not formally expounded, rather it is strikingly illustrated." The text I read from earlier, Exodus 6:6-7, says: I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.

Redemption

So today I would like to use the backdrop of the book of Exodus to talk about the theme of redemption. What does it mean to be redeemed? Well, there are two overlapping concepts, and the first is the idea of buying something back. The English word **redeem** comes from a Latin word, *redimere*, which literally meant "to take, to buy, or to buy back." The idea of redeeming something is to buy it back. Let's say you need a hundred dollars, so you take your watch down to the pawn shop. The proprietor gives you a hundred dollars for it and a little ticket. Later, having come into some funds, you return to the pawn shop with the ticket and purchase your watch back. You will be redeeming your watch. This was actually done in Bible times much as it is done today. Leviticus 25:25-55. says: If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold. If, however, a man has no one to redeem it for him but he himself prospers and acquires sufficient means to redeem it, he is to determine the value for the years since he sold it and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it; he can then go back to his own property.

There is also a second meaning to the idea of redemption, a variation of the first--to free from captivity by the paying of a ransom. Looking again at Leviticus 25, we find these words: If an alien or a temporary resident among you becomes rich and one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells himself to the alien living among you or to a member of the alien's clan, he retains the right of redemption after he has sold himself. One of his relatives may redeem him... (Lev 25:47-48).

Some of the worst persecution in the world today is occurring in Sudan, an Islamic nation just south of Egypt. Christians are captured by the Muslim government and pressed into slavery. I read just last week that a group of European believers, Christian Solidarity International, has purchased and freed many of these Christians, mostly women and children, at a cost of approximately \$50 each. These slaves were being redeemed. Going back to our text in Exodus 6, we read: I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm

Let's put these two concepts together: To redeem means to purchase something back, delivering it from bondage, by the paying of a ransom. This is the word used by the biblical writers to describe what happens to us when we are delivered from sin by Jesus Christ.

Galatians 4:3-5 says: We were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Galatians 3:13 says, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus.

Revelation 5:9 says: And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation (NKJV)

Ephesians 1:7 says: In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

Egypt = The World

Now while this is taught throughout the New Testament, it is illustrated for us in the book of Exodus, and there are several points of similarity.

First, Egypt represents the world. In what way? Egypt was wealthy and affluent. It was a land of many gods, a place of rampant

idolatry. It was under the control of an evil god-like figure. And it was seductive, an appealing land of questionable delights. It was so tantalizing that even after the children of Israel were delivered, their hearts desired to go back. In Exodus 16, immediately after the Lord had delivered them from the armies of Pharaoh and escorted them through the Red Sea, they were bemoaning the fact that in Egypt "we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert..."

In Exodus 17:3 when they were thirsty, the Israelites grumbled to Moses, saying, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt?"

And in Numbers 11, they grew tired of the manna God had been providing, and they said: "If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost--also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!"

So Egypt was an appealing place of questionable delights, but it was also an appalling place of hellish bondage, a place of slavery. And the Bible teaches that this world enslaves us very easily. We become morally and spiritually enslaved by lust and passion and sin. Romans 6 says, Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you have been entrusted and have become slaves to righteousness. I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to immorality and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!

I read this week that the Department of Health and Human Services has just completed a \$400,000 study of today's most popular movies. The study found that 98% of them show characters using alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes, but few of them show any portrayal of hangovers, DUI arrests, or lung cancer. The entertainment industry loves to portray sin without consequences.

But the Bible says that sin enslaves us, that it comes back to haunt us, and that it leads to death and to hell. Egypt was a place of death and despair, a place of hopelessness. And the Bible teaches that it is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment.

Several years ago, writer John Thomas wrote an article in Moody Magazine in which he fleshed out the picture behind the New Testament words describing hell as a bottomless pit of pain, weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, and endless darkness: Imagine the person who just entered hell—a neighbor, relative, co-worker, friend. After a roar of physical pain blasts him, he spends his first moments wailing and gnashing his teeth. But after a season, he grows accustomed to the pain, not that it's become tolerable, but that his capacity for it has enlarged to comprehend it. Though he hurts, he is now able to think, and he instinctively looks about him. But as he looks, he sees only blackness.

In his past life he learned that if he looked long enough, a glow of light somewhere would yield definition to his surroundings. So he blinks and strains to focus his eyes, but his efforts yield only blackness. He turns and strains his eyes in another direction. He waits. He sees nothing but unyielding black ink. It clings to him, smothering and oppressing him.

Realizing that the darkness is not going to give way, he nervously begins to feel for something solid to get his bearings. He reaches for walls or rocks or trees or chairs; he stretches his legs to feel the ground and touches nothing.

Hell is a bottomless pit; however, the new occupant is slow to learn. In growing panic, he kicks his feet and waves his arms. He stretches and he lunges. But he finds nothing. After more feverish tries, he pauses from exhaustion, suspended in black. Suddenly, with a scream he kicks, twists, and lunges until he is again too exhausted to move. He hangs there, alone in his pain. Unable to touch a solid object or see a solitary thing, he begins to weep. His sobs choke through the darkness. They become weak, then lost in hell's roar.

As time passes, he begins to do what the rich man did—he again starts to think. His first thoughts are of hope. You see, he still thinks as he did on earth, where he kept himself alive with hope. When things got bad, he always found a way out. If he felt pain, he took medicine. If he were hungry, he ate food.

...(But) the awful truth spreads before him like endless, overlapping slats: "When I put in ten thousand centuries of time here, I will not have accomplished one thing. I will not have one second less to spend here." The smoke of (his) torment goes up forever and ever.

So Egypt represents the world--a seductive place, but also an enslaving place.

Pharaoh = The Devil

Pharaoh represents the devil, who tries to keep us in bondage; and if he thinks he is about to lose us, he tries to bargain with us.

Have you ever noticed the bargains that Pharaoh tried to make with Moses?

At first, Pharaoh is furious and indignant. Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go (Ex 5:3).

After the Lord sent four of the plagues, Pharaoh called Moses and said, Go, sacrifice to your God here in the land... I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the Lord your God in the desert, but you must not go very far (Ex 8:25, 28). In other words, you can add some religion to your life, but don't go very far with it. Don't get too serious. Keep one foot here in Egypt, here in the world. That's what the devil says to us. "Well, all right, go to church if you want to, but don't get very serious about it."

But Moses said "Nothing doing. That isn't the way it works." And he sent another set of plagues crashing down on Pharaoh.

Then Pharaoh had another idea, another bargain to propose: Then Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. "Go, worship the Lord your God," he said. "But just who will be going?" Moses answered, "We will go with our young and old, with our sons and daughters, and with our flocks and herds, because we are to celebrate a festival to the Lord." Pharaoh said, "The Lord be with you—if I let you go, along with your women and children! No! Have only the men go; and worship the Lord, since that's what you have been asking for." Then Moses and Aaron were driven out of Pharaoh's presence (Ex 10:8-11).

In other words, add some religion to your life if you have to, but don't let it spill over to anyone else. Keep it a private, personal affair. Don't let it affect your husband or wife or children. Don't let it have much impact on your family.

But Moses said, "Nothing doing. That isn't the way it works." And he sent another set of plagues crashing down on Pharaoh.

Then Pharaoh had another idea, another bargain to propose: Go, worship the Lord. Even your women and children may go with you; only leave your flocks and herds behind (10:24). In other words, if you have to become religious, keep it very personal, a private thing with your family. Don't let it intrude into your professional life. Don't let it influence your job. Don't let it interfere with your financial relationships in life.

But Moses said, "Nothing doing. That isn't the way it works."

The Passover

And then we come to Exodus 12 in which two events happened simultaneously. The angel of death swept across the land of Egypt, destroying the firstborn in every home while among the Hebrews the Passover was being celebrated. The people of God were being saved from death by the offering of the blood of the Passover lamb. Look at Exodus 12:12-13: On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you.

Psalm 49 says: No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him—the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough—that he should live on forever and not see decay.

But 1 Peter 1:18 says that one payment was enough: For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without spot or blemish.

Saved by the blood of the Crucified One!
Now ransomed from sin and a new work begun,
Sing praise to the Father and praise to the Son,
Saved by the blood of the Crucified One!

[\(Saved by the Blood Henderson\)](#)

And that's not all. What was the sign, the symbol, the token of Israel's leaving Exodus? It was baptism. The children of Israel walked through the parted waters of the Red Sea to begin their new life, their pilgrimage. 1 Corinthians 10 says that this was a type of baptism: For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drink from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

Baptism doesn't save us, and it isn't required for our salvation. But it is an ordinance and symbol that visually, vividly proclaims that we are leaving the world behind, we are leaving our old life, ready to move into a pilgrimage with our Lord through the wilderness of life on our way to the Promised Land of heaven.

Fifteen hundred years before Christ, God pre-enacted the entire redemptive process for us through the Exodus events. Who, then, can be redeemed?

CNN this week reported a remarkable thing. A man by the name of Kang Khek Lev, 56, admitted that he is the infamous Duch (pronounced Dookh), the chief torturer and executioner of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge. This man directed the main detention center in Phnom Penh where people were taken and tortured during the 1970s when about 2 million Cambodians died. He is considered the most sinister figure in the Khmer Rouge, the head of internal security. At least 15,000 people were shipped to Duch's detention center (a former high school) where they were chained to bed-frames, tortured into making false confessions, and executed. This man was once given a list of children, and asked what to do with them. He wrote three words at the bottom of the page: "Kill them all." In the end, only seven people survived his death camp out of the thousands who were sent there, and these seven have terrible stories to tell of the screams of those dying under torture. When the Khmer Rouge fell from power, Duch disappeared into the jungles.

But in 1995 he somehow encountered a missionary named Christopher Lapel (who, I believe, serves with the Christian Church/Churches of Christ). Lapel was instrumental in bringing Duch to Christ and baptizing him. Duch admitted that he had done very bad things in his life and he asked Jesus Christ to forgive him for his sins. For the last two or three years this man had worked quietly with international aid organizations who didn't really know who he was. But now he has just surfaced publicly to tell the world that he is deeply sorry for his sins, to offer himself up to international authorities for trial, and to announce his conversion to Christ.

Can the blood of Jesus Christ reach a man like that? Can such a person be saved? Yes, he can. There is no one in the world who is beyond the reach of the power of God's redemption. It can even reach down to you and me. If Christ can save a man like that, He can save a man or a woman like you.

Without Christ we are enslaved and ensnared in this world, and the devil is doing everything he can to keep us. But we have one who is "greater than Moses" pleading our case. His blood can ransom us from death, hell, and the grave. At our baptism we announce our new life in Him. And we go on our way singing:

Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed thro' His infinite mercy,
His child, and forever I am.

[\(Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It!\)](#)

Help, Lord! Exodus 14:10

Rob Morgan

Our current series of sermons is entitled "God Will Make A Way," based on the story of the Children of Israel at the Red Sea. You remember how they were trapped there in that desert near the shores of that vast lake. They could go neither forward nor backward, and they faced two equally undesirable options. They could either drown in the sea or they could be mowed down by the sword. Their situation seemed hopeless.

But the story in Exodus 14 is given to show us that there are no hopeless situations where God is concerned, that He will always make a way when there seems to be no way. He works in ways we cannot see. With that in mind, we've been drawing out a sequence of rules from Exodus 14 for handling the discouraging times in our lives.

There are ten principles or rules here in Exodus 14 that can help us in any difficulty we ever encounter. The first three, as we've already seen, are these:

Red Sea Rule #1: When you find yourself in a tough place, recognize that God has either put you here or allowed you to be in this situation for reasons known for now perhaps only to Himself.

Red Sea Rule #2: Be more concerned for God's glory than for your own relief.

Red Sea Rule #3: Acknowledge your enemy, but keep your eyes on Christ.

Now today we're coming to...

Red Sea Rule #4: Pray.

Look at Exodus 14:10: And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.

We aren't talking about our regular, daily prayer habits here, as important as those are. We're talking about crisis-time prayers, prayers that demand importunity and unusual intensity. Prayers for those life-threatening or soul-shattering times that engulf us. Times when we cry out to the Lord. What can we learn here from Exodus 14 about such prayers?

Urgent

First, notice the urgency of the prayer that ascended to heaven, as evidenced by the verb: So they were afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.

I had a friend in college named Joy Thompson whose father had written a little book on prayer that was published by Back to the Bible. My copy is underlined and tattered, but I still treasure it. Here's something that Cameron V. Thompson said:

There comes a time, in spite of our soft, modern ways, when we must be desperate in prayer, when we must wrestle, when we must be outspoken, shameless and importunate. Many of the prayers recorded in Scripture are "cries," and the Hebrew and Greek words are very strong. Despite opinions to the contrary, the Bible recognizes such a thing as storming heaven--"praying through." The fervent prayer of a righteous man is mighty in its working.

"O God, Thou must do as Thou has said!" is the cry of those who must have an answer, who cannot be denied. It is not that we overcome the reluctance of God; rather that we take hold of His willingness, plowing through principalities and powers, inviting His almighty power into our desperate needs.

On various occasions in the past when I've been in Chicago I've visited the Old Pacific Garden Mission, the "grandfather" of all the rescue missions in America. Until recently I didn't know how the Pacific Garden Mission got its start; but I've come across an old book that tells of its early days.

In the 1880s, the Pacific Beer Garden in Chicago was for sale. Long regarded as the most notorious and murderous bar in the Midwest, it was nightly filled with alcohol, drugs, gambling, immorality, and the darkest figures of the underworld.

Imagine, then, how surprised Chicagoans were to wake up one morning in 1880 and read that a sweet Christian couple, George and Sarah Clarke, had purchased the lease for the Pacific Beer Garden.

But Colonel Clarke and his wife knew what they were doing. Promptly dropping the word Beer, they added the word Mission, and launched a ministry to homeless alcoholics and downtrodden men and women. Thus was born the now-world-famous ministry of the Pacific Garden Mission of Chicago--the "Old Lighthouse"--the second oldest rescue mission in the United States.

In the early years, Colonel and Mrs. Clarke bore the cost of the mission themselves, but as expenses grew and the ministry expanded their funds became low. Eventually the day came when they could not pay the rent. Attempts to secure the needed funds failed, and Colonel Clarke was told that he had only twenty-four hours to make the payment; otherwise he would lose his lease, and the Pacific Garden Mission would close.

Throughout the night, Colonel and Mrs. Clarke prayed, asking God to guide and to provide in His own way and time. They reminded the Lord of the souls being saved each night, of the men and women whose lives were being salvaged. They asked Him why they should find themselves in such straits while trying to do His work. But, determining to trust and not question, they remained before the Throne of Grace in simple faith and in earnest pleading until the breaking of dawn.

When they emerged from their Morgan Park house that morning, they gasped. What had happened to their front yard? It was covered with something white, something that instantly reminded them of the manna of the Old Testament. Looking closer, they discovered their lawn was filled with mushrooms of the very best quality. It was quite mysterious because it wasn't the season for mushrooms.

Gathering the crop, the Clarkes carted the mushrooms down the street and sold them to the chefs at the Palmer House, the famed hotel just off Michigan Avenue, for a large price. The receipts were enough to pay the rent with enough left over to meet other ministry expenses.

The Old Pacific Garden Mission carried on, its work undeterred. Years later, "Mother" Clarke, commenting on the experience, said, "No mushrooms were ever seen there before--nor any since."

Unfeigned

The second thing we can say about the prayers of the Israelites by the Red Sea is that their prayer was unfeigned, sincere, and utterly earnest. They weren't like the Pharisees who prayed beautifully worded prayers just to be seen and heard by their peers. They weren't praying just because it was in their religious ritual to pray at that hour. They were alarmed, frightened, and their outburst of prayer was real, raw, and earnest.

Listen to the way the men and women of the Bible prayed, and compare it to your own prayer life:

/Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain for three and a half years.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. (1Th 3:10)

Luke's Gospel says about Jesus: And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

1 Peter 4:7 (NLT) says: The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers.

Colossians 4:2 says: Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.

We're told in the same passage about a man named Epaphras, who is always wrestling in prayer for you that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

The prophet Daniel wrote: So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God.

When the Assyrian Emperor Sennacherib sent King Hezekiah a letter threatening the annihilation of the Jews, we're told Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord. And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord: "O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth.... And he prayed down the victory.

The story of the Bible is the story of sincere men and women, moving the machinery of heaven and hell through their earnest praying. There are times in our lives when only urgent, earnest prayer will do.

United

The third thing to notice about the prayer of the Israelites is that it is a united prayer. The pronoun is plural: . So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.

There's something about having another person or other people praying for us that intensifies prayer and sends it to heaven with greater velocity. I was reading in a Gideon publication the other day about a young man, 19, named James Stegalls who was sent to Vietnam during the war. Though he carried a small Gideon New Testament in his shirt pocket, he couldn't bring himself to read it. His buddies were cut down around him, terror was building within him, and God seemed far away. His twentieth birthday passed, then his twenty-first. At last, he felt he couldn't go on.

On February 26, 1968, he prayed for it all to end, and his heart told him he would die before dusk. Sure enough, his base came under attack that day and Jim heard a rocket coming straight toward him. Three seconds to live, he told himself, then two, then...

A friend shoved him into a grease pit, and he waited for the rocket to explode, but there was only a surreal silence. The fuse malfunctioned. For five hours James knelt in that pit, and finally his quivering hand reached into his shirt pocket and took out his Testament. Beginning with Matthew, he continued through the first 18 chapters.

"When I read Matthew 18:19-20," he said, "I somehow knew things would be all right."

Long after Jim returned home, as he visited his wife's grandmother, Mrs. Harris, she told him of a night years before when she had awakened in terror. Knowing Jim was in Vietnam, she had sensed he was in trouble. She began praying for God to spare his life. Unable to kneel because of arthritis, she lay prone on the floor, praying and reading her Bible all night.

Just before dawn she read Matthew 18:19-20: If two of you agree down here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. For where two or three gather together because they are mine, I am there among them. She immediately called her Sunday School teacher, who got out of bed and went to Mrs. Harris' house where together they claimed the Lord's promise as they prayed for Jim until reassured by God's peace.

Having told Jim the story, Mrs. Harris opened her Bible to show him where she had marked the passage. In the margin were the words: Jim, February 26, 1968.

Sometimes we need the power of united prayer. Even one other person, praying along with you earnestly, can help turn the tide of a matter.

Unbelieving

But the last thing I want you to notice about the Israelites by the Red Sea is this-- their prayer, though urgent, unfeigned, and united, was yet unbelieving.

Look at the way the whole paragraph unfolds: And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

They prayed, but they didn't have a shred of faith that God could or would actually answer their prayer. Now, the Lord in His graciousness answered their prayer anyway for His own Name's sake, but He was dishonored by their lack of faith.

But let me give you a countering Old Testament example. Look at 1 Samuel 1:1-28. Here the woman Hannah, wife of Elkanah, is very troubled, deeply burdened to pray for a son. Her husband had married another woman and now had two wives, just in order to provide children for himself, for Hannah was barren. The home was fractured, and Hannah's rivals provoked her day and night. The problems were deep, painful, and seemed endless. One day Hannah could stand it no longer.

/In bitterness of soul, Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord.... As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard.

/In bitterness of soul, Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord.... As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard.

You can see how earnestly and urgently she was praying and pleading with the Lord.

Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine."

"Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord."

Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine."

"Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord."

Notice that description of earnest, urgent prayer. It is "pouring our souls out" to the Lord. She was "casting her burden upon the Lord," and the result is seen in 1Sa 1:18: Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

Going to the place of prayer, she was unable to eat, her stomach was churning, and her face reflected the anguish of her heart. But she took her problem to the Lord, prayed about it until she had a sense that God had heard and responded, then she got up utterly confident that He was going to take matters in hand one way or the other. She trusted Him, and as a result her appetite returned and her face was filled with radiance.

Now, was Hannah pregnant at that point? Had she conceived? Was there a baby in her womb? No. Outwardly things were just as they had been before. Nothing had changed. But having given her problem to the Lord, she trusted Him to handle it for her, and that made all the difference.

It was what James would later call the prayer of faith. J. Oswald Sanders once wrote: An analysis of our prayers might afford the disconcerting discovery that many of them are not the prayer of faith at all, only the prayer of hope, or even of despair. We earnestly hope they will be answered, but have no unshakable assurance to that effect. God has, however, undertaken to answer only the prayer of faith. "Whatever you pray for and ask, believe that you have got it, and you shall have it" (Mark 11:24, Moffatt).

Thomas Watson, the Puritan writer, said, Faith is to prayer what the feather is to the arrow; it feathers the arrow of prayer, and makes it fly swifter, and pierce the throne of grace.

Let me give you a closing example. Alice Taylor and her husband, missionaries, had sent their four children across the vastness of China to boarding school at Chefoo. When the Japanese invaded the region in the early 1940s, reunion became impossible. One day Alice, already fretting, entered her house just as the paperboy arrived with dramatic news: "Pearl Harbor Attacked!" She instantly knew conditions had dramatically worsened for the children, especially since Chefoo had been in the Japanese line of attack.

I remembered the horror stories of Nanking--where all of the young women of that town had been brutally raped. And I thought of our lovely Kathleen, beginning to blossom into womanhood.... Great gulping sobs wrenched my whole body. I lay there, gripped by

the stories we had heard from refugees--violent deaths, starvation, the conscription of young boys--children--to fight. I thought of ten-year-old Jamie, so conscientious, so even-tempered. "What has happened to Jamie, Lord? Has someone put a gun in his hands? Ordered him to the front lines? To death?" Mary and John, so small and so helpless, had always been inseparable. "Merciful God," I cried, "are they even alive?"

As Alice knelt, sobbing and praying, a scene from her childhood came suddenly to mind. Her minister, "Pa" Ferguson, back in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, had shared Matthew 6:33 with her--"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." His rendering of the verse had been: Alice, if you take care of the things that are dear to God, He will take care of the things dear to you.

Alice now felt God had given her those words just for this day. A deep peace replaced my agony. This war had not changed God's promise. With that assurance I felt the aching weight of fear in my stomach lift.

Alice daily concentrated on taking care of things dear to God--visiting the sick, holding open-air meetings in the villages, delivering babies. Conditions at Chefoo worsened--the students were captured and herded into a Japanese concentration camp. The war meanwhile reached Alice's region; all around her bombs fell, rockets exploded. She, however, devoted herself to treating the wounded, distributing Scriptures to doctors, officers, troops, and students--and to taking care of things important to God.

Years passed. Then as I sat one September evening in our home during a faculty meeting, my mind wondered once more to the children. Again I pictured them as I had last seen them, waving goodbye. I heard their voices, faintly, calling excitedly. Then I heard their voices louder. Was I imaging this? No, their voices were real! And they came bursting through the doorway. "Mommy, Daddy, we're home--we're home!" And they flew into our arms. Our hugs, our shouts filled the room. We couldn't let go of one another. It had been five and a half long, grueling years. Yet there they were--thin, but alive and whole, laughing and crying. Oh, they had grown! But Kathleen still wore the same blue jumper she had worn when I last saw her....

For our family that advice from Pa Ferguson long ago will always hold special meaning. I pass it along to you, for it is truly so: "If you take care of the things that are dear to God, He will take care of the things dear to you."

When facing impossible odds, learn to pray... urgently, unfeignedly, unitedly. And learn to trust the One who tells us to come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Exodus 14:5-9 Strong Enemy, Stronger Ally

Rob Morgan

Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him. Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them. And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness. So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Ball Zephon -- Exodus 14:5-9

My daughter was napping in her dormitory one day when she awoke with a start. An oppressing sense of evil invaded her room, and she felt a physical force descending upon her, pressing her into her bed as though to suffocate her. In sudden terror, she called out, "Lord, help me!" Instantly the malevolent force vanished, leaving her weak and weeping.

The devil sometimes launches direct, frontal attacks; usually, however, he is more conniving and insidious. But whenever and however he attacks, he is closer at hand and far more dangerous than we realize.

We may well compare him to the Pharaoh of Exodus. As the Lord led the Israelites out of Egypt, He knew in advance the King of Egypt would pursue them with a powerful army and with destructive intent. Accordingly, as the tyrant gazed over his wasted domain, he saw slave ghettos deserted like ghost towns. His building projects were suspended and the sounds of construction had ceased. There was no pounding of hammers, scraping of rocks, shouting of foremen. The snap of the lash was hushed. Nor was a slave by his side to draw his bath, oil his body, prepare his breakfast, or bow at his feet. He had been humiliated, plundered, and humbled in full view of his countrymen. Pharaoh's anger rose like mercury in a thermometer.

"What have we done?" he roared. "We've let the Israelites go. We've lost our slaves! Summon the generals! Wake the troops! Harness the chariots!" Weary Egyptian soldiers flew from beds and barracks, horses bolted from their stalls, and the army mobilized in record time. The Egyptians--with all the king's horses, chariot drivers, and army--chased the Israelites. They caught up with them

while they were camped by the Red Sea (Exodus 14:9, NCV).

Have you ever been oppressed? Sensed the devil nipping at your heels? Wondered if your abrupt and simultaneous troubles were orchestrated by an evil, invisible hand? Ever suspected that your depression or anger, strong as it was, stemmed from an unusually malevolent source?

The third Red Sea Rule says: Acknowledge your enemy, but keep your eyes on Christ.

Consider the parallels between Pharaoh and Satan. Both are cruel and powerful, coveting the power of God Himself. Both have been plundered by the Lord Almighty, and both are enraged beyond endurance. Both have assembled vast armies for the destruction of God's people--yet neither seems to realize how utterly defeated he already is.

The devil, however, though defeated, is still dangerous. I read a newspaper story recently quoting doctors at the Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona, who warned that rattlesnakes thought to be dead can still strike, bite, and kill. A large number of patients are admitted to the hospital each year suffering from bites from rattlers thought to be dead. Sometimes the snakes had been shot and their heads cut off; but the snake's mouth retains a reflex action, and one study showed that snake heads could still make striking-type motions for up to 60 minutes after decapitation.

Satan, called in Scripture "that old serpent," was defeated at Calvary, his head cut off. Hebrews 2 says that Christ, our High Priest, by His death destroyed him who holds the power of death--the devil--just as David slew Goliath with the giant's own sword. But for a season Satan can still strike and wound us. He can still tempt us, hurt us, poison our relationships, spread his deadly venom into our homes and lives

We can see this illustrated in Scripture by studying the two most prominent evangelists in the New Testament--Peter and Paul.

Simon Peter Vs. Satan

In Luke 22:31, Jesus warned Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat." These words seem to harken back to the book of Job, when Satan approached God soliciting and obtaining access to Job's life, health, and family. But what does it mean to be sifted as wheat?

The Greek word for sift is [siniazo](#), which literally means to shake as in a sieve. This is the only time this word occurs in the New Testament, but in Amos 9:9 we read this description: "For I will give the command, and I will shake the house of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, and not a pebble will reach the ground."

Wheat was a premier Middle Eastern crop, being mentioned over fifty times in the Bible. After the grain had been harvested, the kernels were stripped from the stalks, crushed, then poured into large wooden bowl-shaped sieves and shaken violently, so that the sticks and gravel and foreign objects would be separated from the wheat. The wheat would fall through the filters, leaving the debris behind.

The basic idea behind the Greek word *siniazo* is that of violent shaking. Ironically this has been in the news of late, as reports continue to come out of the nation of Israel regarding the torture of suspected terrorists. Until recently, Israeli security agents have apparently felt free to use various torture techniques to gain information. One of the most notorious methods is called "Tiltul" in Hebrew or "Hazz" in Arabic, and is defined as violent shaking. The detainee is held by the collar or shoulders and violently shaken for up to five minutes. Victims sometimes lose consciousness as a result, and at least one person has died from hemorrhaging of the brain.

This is how Satan desires to treat us--to grab us by the shoulders or collar and shake us until our teeth rattle, until our brain is bleeding. He wants to dislodge us spiritually, to send upheaval into our lives. With Peter it happened suddenly in one terrible, never-to-be-forgotten night. Romans soldiers appeared in the darkness, his friend was arrested, his courage evaporated, his foundations crumbled, and his Lord was sent to the cross.

With you and me, the sifting might arrive with the bank statement, a letter from the IRS, a call from the doctor, a wreck on the freeway, a failing grade, a lost customer, a failed business, an angry spouse, a middle-of-the-night phone call.

Peter, remembering his own sifting, later warned his converts to be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Of all the preachers in Christian history I wish I could have heard, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the British "Prince of Preachers," is at the top of the list. He arrived in London as a young, inexperienced Baptist minister, but virtually overnight such crowds gathered that no building could contain his hearers. He was only 22 years old when, in an effort to further maximum his audience, he arranged to rent Royal Surrey Garden's Music Hall, London's most commodious and beautiful building, for Sunday night services. Surrey Hall

usually accommodated secular concerts, carnivals, and circuses. Using it as a place of worship was unheard of in its day, and the news spread through London like lightning.

On Sunday morning, October 19, 1856, preaching at New Park Street Chapel, Spurgeon predicted: "We shall be gathered together tonight where an unprecedented mass of people will assemble, perhaps from idle curiosity, to hear God's Word, to see what God can do."

People began arriving at Surrey Hall in mid-afternoon, and the atmosphere was like a circus. By service time, 12,000 people had streamed into the Hall and an additional 10,000 overflowed into the surrounding gardens. London had never seen anything like it. The services started, but as Spurgeon rose to pray, someone suddenly shouted "Fire! Fire! The galleries are giving way!" There was no fire, but the crowd bolted in panic, and in the resulting stampede seven people were trampled to death. Twenty-eight more were hospitalized.

The young preacher gazed at the chaos in unbelieving shock, unable to absorb what was happening. He was literally carried from the pulpit to a friend's house where he remained in seclusion for weeks. He wept by day and suffered terrifying dreams at night. He later said, "My thoughts were all a case of knives, cutting my heart to pieces." For years afterward, Spurgeon suffered bouts of deep depression, the roots of which were grounded in that night of terror.

Who, really, was behind that tragedy? Who's evil hand was at work behind the scenes? Who really shouted "Fire!" in crowded Surrey Hall, either directly or indirectly? The Enemy! Sensing the unusual spiritual power possessed by this young man, Satan designed to sift him like wheat, to shake him until his brain hemorrhaged.

But the devil--like Pharaoh--overreached, going so far in his efforts to "steal, kill, and destroy," that the attempt backfired. In the weeks following the tragedy, the Lord used a passage of Scripture--Philippians 2:10--to bring healing to Spurgeon's mind. Though he suffered off-and-on from melancholy afterward, his very depressions only made him more dependant on God and more powerful and empathic in the pulpit. Furthermore, it was the dramatic news of the Surrey Hall disaster that vaulted Spurgeon to international fame and made him a preacher all the world wanted to hear.

"Simon, Simon," said Jesus, "Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, and He still intercedes for His children when they're in the sieve just as He prayed for Peter long ago. He is interceding for you. When your world is being shaken to its foundations, when you're under siege, when you almost think you'd rather die than face your problems, acknowledge your enemy. But keep your eyes on Christ.

For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing,
Were not the right man on our side,
The man of God's own choosing:

Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

[\(A Mighty Fortress Is Our God\)](#)

St. Paul Vs. Satan

A British newspaper, the Sun, recently carried an interesting story with the headline: VICAR SAVAGED BY DOG CALLED SATAN. "A vicar," reported the paper, "is recovering from being savaged by an alsatian called Satan. Alan Elwood, 45, was bitten all over his body and his trousers and shirt were ripped to shreds in the farmyard attack in Westport, Somerset. 'It was terrifying. I was lucky to get out of it,' Mr. Elwood told The Sun."

Rev. Elwood is neither the first nor last Christian to be attacked by Satan. We often underestimate the extent to which our ancient foe seeks to disrupt our lives. But a little of the veil is lifted from the machinery in the writings of the Apostle Paul, allowing us to glimpse how involved Satan was in opposing the Lord's servant.

Consider these things: When Paul encountered those trying to hinder his ministry and dissuade his hearers from responding, he saw the hand of Satan. In Acts 13, for example, he is opposed in Cyprus during his first missionary tour by a sorcerer named Elymas who withstood him and sought to turn away his converts. "Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit looked intently on him and said, 'O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?'"

When the Apostle looked out over an unsaved audience, he blamed Satan for the deceiving and enslaving the people. In Acts 26:18, Jesus Christ, in commissioning Paul into the ministry, sent him to "open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." Paul told the Corinthians, "If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age (Satan) has blinded" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). Paul told the Ephesians that prior to their salvation, they walked "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience," referring to Satan. The Apostle lamented to his young friend Timothy that those who reject the truth of the gospel are trapped in the "snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will."

Likewise, when men and women confessed Christ as Savior, Paul saw that as a clear blow to Satan's evil empire. "He (God) has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love in whom we have redemption through His blood," he wrote in Colossians 1:13-14.

When Paul encountered troublemakers in the church, he discerned the crafty hand of Satan. He wrote in Romans 16:17-20 that though some in the church caused divisions and offences troubling to the church, yet "the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly."

When Paul became sick, he knew that Satan had a hand in it. He referred to his illness as "a messenger of Satan to buffet me" (2 Corinthians 12:7).

When he was unable to revisit the Thessalonians church, Paul blamed it on the devil: "We wanted to come to you--even I, Paul, time and again--but Satan hindered us" (1 Thessalonians 2:18).

When Paul exercised church discipline on an erring member, he considered it turning such a one over to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:5).

When married couples in his churches had poor sexual relationships, exacerbating temptations toward immorality, Paul blamed it on Satan (1 Corinthians 7:5).

When the apostle came across Gentiles worshipping before idols, he knew that Satan was behind it (1 Corinthians 10:20-21).

When he found Christians harboring angry, bitter, or unforgiving attitudes toward others, he discerned the hand of Satan. He instructed the Ephesians, "Never go to bed angry--don't give the devil that sort of foothold" (Ephesians 4:26-27, Phillips). He told the Corinthians to forgive the man who had sinned against the church, "lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."

When his converts strayed away morally or doctrinally, Paul attributed it to the devil. "I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." He admitted to Timothy, "Some have already turned aside after Satan" (1 Timothy 5:15; also see 1Ti 4:1).

When false teachers crept into his areas, Paul believed they had been sent by Satan (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

When local church leaders made a mess of their reputation and work, he blamed the evil one (1 Timothy 3:6-7).

"Our fight is not against any physical enemy," Paul warned the Ephesians. "It is against organizations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls the dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil" (Ephesians 6:12, Phillips).

The New York Times, reporting a survey by the Barna Group, noted diminishing belief in the devil among Americans. Two-thirds of Americans do not believe in the devil as a living entity. In a nationwide telephone survey of 1,007 randomly selected people, pollsters asked whether they agreed that Satan is "not a living being, but is a symbol of evil." Sixty-two percent agreed with the statement, while 30 percent disagreed; the remaining eight percent had no opinion.

"If less than one in three Americans seems willing to give the devil his due," reported the Times, "then that is a result of fundamental, long-term shifts in the nation's religious culture."

But if two-thirds of Americans didn't believe in the sun, that wouldn't keep them from sunburn. In the Bible, the patriarch Job lost, in one terrible season, his herds to barbarians, his children to a tornado, his health to disease, his wealth to misfortune. As he sat

among the ashes scraping his boils with pottery shards and bemoaning his fate, he did not realize that his afflictions had all been orchestrated by Satan in an attempt to destroy his soul.

The same devil orchestrates the same tragedies against us today. How do we respond? First, we draw near to Christ and keep ourselves under the protective cloud of His grace. In Exodus 14, Pharaoh could threaten with brawn and bluster, he could stir up frightening clouds of chariot dust, he could terrify with glints of sunshine reflecting from a thousand swords. But he was powerless to actually harm the Israelites as long as they remained under the protective cloud of God's glory and grace. "Resist him (Satan), steadfast in the faith," wrote Peter in 1 Peter 5:9.

Several years ago, I was walking down a sidewalk in East Nashville, making a pastoral visit. Suddenly I saw a German Shepherd flying across a lawn, his teeth bared and a malicious growl rumbling from his chest. With barking, foaming, snapping jaws, he lunged at me and I screamed in terror and fell backward. But between me and my attacker, there was a chain link fence. The dog struck the fence with his full force, snarling as though he would kill me. My heart was beating double time, but I was utterly safe because of the protecting fence.

Satan can growl and bark and lunge and threaten to undo us. But as long as we're inside the fence of God's grace, he can do us no real or lasting harm. We are protected by the blood of Christ.

We must store up God's word in our hearts, study our Bibles, steel ourselves against temptation, and, in the words of Ephesians 6, to "put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." But we always make a mistake when we acknowledge the Lord and keep our eyes on Satan. Better far to acknowledge our foe while keeping our eyes of Christ.

For all his insights and explanations about the evil one, the Apostle Paul, in reality, focused on Christ. In the Pauline letters, the word Jesus occurs in 219 verses, the word Lord in 272 verses, and the word Christ is found in 389 verses.

Satan, on the other hand, occurs in only ten verses, and the word devil in six verses.

When things are going badly, when you feel trapped between sword and sea, acknowledge the devil--but keep your eyes of Christ. He will see you through. He will make a way.

Exodus 14:13-14 Leave Room For God

Rob Morgan

In our series of messages from Exodus 14, we've thus far discovered four rules for handling trying situations; today we're coming to Red Sea Rule #5.

Red Sea Rule #1: When you find yourself in a tough place, recognize that God has either put you here or allowed you to be here for reasons known perhaps only to Himself.

Rule #2: Be more concerned for God's glory than for your own relief.

Rule #3: Acknowledge your enemy, but keep your eyes on Christ.

Rule #4: Pray

Red Sea Rule #5: Don't be afraid. Stay calm and confident, and give the Lord time to work.

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."--Exodus 14:13-14

Leave Room for God...! -- Romans 12:19

I stumbled across those latter four words in my Bible reading once during a prolonged bout of anxiety, and they've bolstered me through several crises since. I draw strength by repeating them to myself, reminding myself that in every difficulty I have an Almighty Ally, and I need to give Him time to untangle the threads and cut through the knots.

I may not be able to solve every problem, but I can leave room for God. I may not be able to cure every hurt or avoid every fear, but I can leave room for God. I don't have the answer to every dilemma, but I can leave room for God to work.

Though the immediate context of the words Leave room for God involves committing to God those who wrong us (the text is telling us to leave insults and injuries to the Lord, allowing room for His wrath and letting Him settle accounts: "I will repay," says the Lord),

the principle of "Leave Room for God" is transferable to other circumstances. In their awful impasse by the Red Sea, the Israelites had to step away from the plate and leave room for God.

Cameron V. Thompson wrote: We must let God work. That is, we should not try to answer our own prayers, unless the Lord Himself should lead that way. Shall we take a sieve and try to make a passage through the Red Sea by bailing out the water, or shall we push at the walls of Jericho while marching around them? "Commit thy way unto ["roll thy way upon,"] the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Ps. 37:5)....

Abraham asked God for a son (Gen. 15:2) and then tried to help God out by taking Hagar to be his wife (Gen. 16:1-2), hearkening to the voice of Sarai, his wife, rather than the voice of God. How awful when we meddle with the plans of God and try to answer our own prayers!

So leave room for God; He alone can storm the impregnable, devise the improbable, and perform the impossible. He alone can solve every problem, heal every hurt, and make every circumstance work together for the good of His children. That is the essence of the fifth Red Sea Rule, which says: Don't be afraid. Stay calm and confident, and give the Lord time to work.

This is the advice Moses gave to the Children of Israel during Zero Hour at the Red Sea, and this brings us to the heart of the story. Exodus 14:11-14 says: Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us...." And Moses said to the people: "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."

The Amplified Bible puts it like this: Fear not, stand still (firm, confident, undismayed) and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will work for you today. For the Egyptians you have seen today you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace and remain at rest.

Don't Be Afraid

God's injunction against fear is one of the most frequently repeated commands in the Bible. Back in 1988, I read through the entire Bible, Genesis to Revelation, looking for phrases like fear not and do not be afraid. I discovered 107 such occurrences in the Old Testament, and 42 in the New Testament. Anything mentioned that frequently in the Bible must be either a common condition among men, a great priority with God, or both.

As I studied these verses and as I observed other verses dealing with similar emotions, one thing became clear. God intends for His children, with His help, to keep their emotions under control.

That's hard for us to do, because the very word Emotion is the word Motion with an E in front of it--for Erratic, I suppose. Our feelings go up and down, sometimes with the velocity of a roller coaster. One moment we're overwhelmed with anger, another moment we're consumed with love and lust, the next moment we're in the throes of depression or anxiety. These are very strong emotions, driven on by sometimes overwhelming circumstances. But we almost always get into trouble when we allow our emotions free reign.

In fact, one can make a case that maturity is the ability to keep one's emotions under control. Think of a toddler, a child two or three years old. He has little control over his emotions, so when he becomes happy, he is very happy, racing through the house like a tornado, laughing, playing, screaming, unwilling to go to bed or take a nap. He is animated from the top of his head to the tips of his wriggling toes. But when he is angry, he is angry all over--a bundle of raw, unrestrained fury that screams, cries, and stomps his feet.

We must discipline that child. "Go stand in the corner," we say, "until you calm down and get your emotions under control." As that child learns to manage his emotions instead of letting his emotions manage him, we say that he is maturing.

The same is true for us as adults.

Take anger, for example. I was conducting a marriage retreat a couple of years ago, and in the course of my remarks I quoted Proverbs 29:11: A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control (NIV). Afterward a burley, muscular young man came up to me, his wife beside him, and said, "You nailed me to the wall when you quoted that verse."

"How?" I asked.

"I've always told my wife that it was healthy for me to blow up and ventilate my feelings and get things off my chest during arguments. I've said some terrible things to her, using that excuse. Now I realize that I've been a fool in this area and I've got to learn to restrain my anger and my words."

The same is true regarding grief. No one denies that grief is a powerful emotion, and even Jesus Christ--our Resurrection and our

Life--wept by the tomb of Lazarus. But I've been at funerals where people lost control of their emotions and wailed in pitiful, unrestrained, hopelessness. That may be appropriate for non-Christians, but it isn't for those who know the Lord.

Recently I conducted the funeral of a four-year-old girl who died of cerebral palsy. During the service, the guests had trouble hearing the Scripture and the musical selections because of the mother's wailing: I don't want her to die... Just let me hold her... I miss her so much....

I'm normally a sympathetic soul, but as I waited my turn to speak, I became convinced that for the mother's own good she had to get herself under control. I asked the Lord for guidance, then rose and said these words:

Jesus Christ once attended a funeral of a little girl, and He spoke the most astounding words. He said, "What is all this commotion and wailing?" (Mark 5:39, NIV). I instantly had everyone's attention, for my words had such direct bearing. Even the mother stopped her sobbing long enough to look up. I continued, The Bible says that while it's alright to sorrow, we Christians are not to grieve like the rest of men who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). It was a gentle rebuke at an incredibly sensitive time, but it was well received. I went on to speak from 2 Kings 4:26 about the death of the Shunammite's son: It is well with the child. I discussed God's mercy, the healing and hope the little girl had already experienced in heaven, how happy she was, and I talked about the coming resurrection and reunion.

After the service, the mother approached her little daughter's open coffin for the last time, but this time there was a glow on her face. "Thank you for what you said," she whispered. "I see things so differently now."

The same principle holds true for our emotions of love and lust. The word says, "If it feels good, do it." Many of our television programs and movies are about people who fall in and out of love, in and out of bed, led along purely by emotional and physical infatuation.

But the Lord says, "Don't trust your feelings, and never held hostage by them. You're to walk by faith, not by feelings. You're to walk in obedience to my word, not as people enslaved by your emotions."

Now, the same is true for feelings of fear, worry, panic, and anxiety; and that's the point of the story in Exodus 14. The children of Israel had every reason for utter terror. They were cornered like rabbits by encircling wolves, and the dust clouds in the distance rose up like demons. The Israelites weren't just facing re-enslavement or death, they were facing the slaughter of their families, their little ones, their aged parents, before their very eyes. There was no human escape. Annihilation was hurtling towards them like a swarm of hornets.

But consider this: While there were good reasons for being afraid, there were even better reasons for remaining confident. They had an Ally who had turned sticks into snakes and water into blood. They had an Ally who had sent lightning and locusts and a fistful of other plagues upon the Egyptians, until the land of the Nile had been plundered and ruined. They had an Ally who accompanied them as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

And that Ally was saying: "Get a grip on yourself. Reel in these destructive, runaway emotions. Bring yourself under control. Work your way from fear to faith, and trust Me, for I'm going to take care of this. I'm going to fight for you."

The Lord once soundly rebuked me along these lines by a sermon from the British physician-turned-expositor, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. It was a difficult time in my life and I found myself, unable to smile by day or sleep by night. Lloyd-Jones was preaching from Luke 8 about the disciples in the storm on Galilee, and he described how terrified they were--as frightened in that storm as the Israelites were by the Red Sea. At first glance, their fear seemed logical and natural. They were, after all, exhausted, caught in a small boat amid mountainous waves in the middle of the night. Soaked to the skin. Cold. Miles from shore. Going down. Drowning. Yet Jesus rebuked them in no uncertain terms for giving into their fear. "Why are you so afraid?" asked our Lord. "Where is your faith?"

In his sermon, Lloyd-Jones drew a sharp conclusion: It is very wrong for a Christian ever to be in such a condition. I do not care what the circumstances may be, the Christian should never be agitated (I was very agitated), the Christian should never be beside himself (I was beside myself), the Christian should never be at his wit's end, the Christian should never be in a condition in which he has lost control of himself.... A Christian should never, like the worldly person, be depressed, agitated, alarmed, frantic, not knowing what to do.... The Christian is never meant to be carried away by his feelings, whatever they are.... I lay it down as a simple proposition that a Christian should never lose self-control, should never be in a state of agitation or terror or alarm, whatever the circumstances.... It implies a lack of trust and confidence in Him.

I have seldom been so reprimanded by a sermon--and I have seldom been so thankful for it.

In case after case in Scripture, the Lord commands his servants, "Do not be afraid! Get a grip on yourself. Why do you fear? Where is your faith? Trust me, and don't cave in to numbing, paralyzing fear. Fear Not!"

Be Calm

But now, the Lord goes even further. He not only deals with the Israelites negatively, He deals with them positively. He not only tells them, "Fear not!" He also commands them to adopt an attitude of quiet, calm, confidence. He tells them to be still, to give Him room to work. Rather than trying to solve this problem by themselves, He wants them to stand over to the side and let Him handle it. Their only obligation was to stand still and stay calm.

Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today... hold your peace."

It reminds us of Psalm 46:10: Be still and know that I am God.

It reminds us of Isaiah 30:15: In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.

It reminds us of Proverbs 17:27: A man of understanding is of a calm spirit.

The Bible sometimes calls this waiting on God. When Ruth Bell Graham was suffering acute anxiety over her prodigal sons, the Lord brought a powerful truth to her heart. She later wrote, "We mothers must take care of the possible and trust God for the impossible. We are to love, affirm, encourage, teach, listen, and care for the physical needs of the family. We cannot convict of sin, create hunger and thirst after God, or convert. These are miracles, and miracles are not in our department."

In our distresses in life, when we're facing impossible situations, when we're trapped on the shores of the Red Sea of Sorrows, we must trust God with the impossible and leave room for Him to work.

The Lord Will Fight for You

As it is put here in Exodus 14: The Lord will fight for you. This isn't the only time in the Bible we find words like these. In fact, as I studied this subject, I concluded that this is one of the promises the Lord most enjoys repeating. Consider these examples:

- Forty years later in Deuteronomy 1:29-31, Moses told the younger generation of Israelites this about the enemies they would face in Canaan: "Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. 'The Lord your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes."
- Three chapters later, he repeated, "You must not fear them, for the Lord your God Himself fights for you." (Deuteronomy 3:22)
- Again, in Deuteronomy 20:3-4, Moses said, "So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. And he shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'"
- In Deuteronomy 31:6: "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."
- Joshua 10:42 tells us that in the conquest of the Promised Land, "All these kings and their lands Joshua took at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel."
- Such words must have made quite an impression on a shepherd-boy who pondered over them hundreds of years later, for in 1 Samuel 17:47, as the young David approached Goliath, he echoed these words: "This day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's."
- Many more years passed, and one day David's descendant, King Jehoshaphat, faced a situation as deadly as any Israel had ever faced. In 2 Chronicles 20, an alliance of enemy nations sent their combined armies to destroy Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat and his people were trapped and the Bible says they feared and fasted. But God raised up a prophet named Jahaziel who stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem with this message: "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the Lord to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's.'"
- A few years later, during the reign of King Hezekiah, the mightiest empire on earth, the Assyrian Empire under Sennacherib, marched against Jerusalem. The Assyrian army was vast and invincible, and the Jews had no chance of escape or victory. But good king Hezekiah stood up with a message to his people. In 2 Chronicles 32:8, he said: "Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that is with him; for there are more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles." And the people were strengthened by the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

- More centuries pass, and in Nehemiah 4:20, as they encounter opposition to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah issues these words: "Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."
- The Psalmist said, "Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle" (Psalm 24:8).
- Romans 8 provides the New Testament version, saying, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ...In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

Do these words have significance for us today? One of the most dramatic stories in missionary history occurred in the early 1950s when nearly a thousand missionary personnel under the China Inland Mission were trapped in China when the Communists took over. CIM ordered a total evacuation in January, 1951, but was it too late? Communists are not adverse to killing.

Arthur and Wilda Mathews applied for exit visas on January 3. Their living conditions had deteriorated to a bare kitchen where, in the corner, Wilda had converted a footlocker into a prayer nook. Days passed with no action on their requests. Meanwhile citizens were executed every day, and from her kitchen Wilda could hear the shots. The strain grew unbearable. "The imagination is what jumps around into all sorts of places it ought to keep out of," Arthur wrote to his parents.

He was told at last that his wife and child could leave if he would secretly work for the Communists. Arthur refused. Day after day he was summoned and grilled. Day after day he said good-bye to Wilda, wondering if he would ever see her again. Finally Arthur bluntly told the authorities, "I am not a Judas. If you expect me or anyone else in the China Inland Mission to do that kind of thing, you had better not try because we cannot do it."

Wilda was utterly overcome by fear and doubt. Sunday, March 21, 1951, was, as she called it later, Black Easter. Wilda sneaked into an Easter church service, but when she opened her mouth to sing "He Lives!" no words came out. Returning home, she fell at the trunk and her trembling fingers found 2 Chronicles 20: The battle is not yours, but God's.... You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem! Do not fear or be dismayed. Wilda clamped onto those words, and two weeks later she wrote, "The conflict has been terrible, but peace and quiet reign now."

Over the next two years, the Mathews repeatedly faced impossible situations, their lives in danger, their little baby in harm's way, their pantry empty, their enemies surrounding them. But Arthur and Wilda committed every situation, one after another, into the Lord's hands. Miraculously, in God's timing, all the CIM missionaries got out without a single one being martyred, the last one being Arthur Mathews. It was the greatest exodus in missionary history.

There are many times in life in which we cannot solve problems, heal hurts, change circumstances, or win our own battles. We must commit them to God on our knees, and then take our stand to see what He will do. We must leave room for God. Give him time. Don't rush into His territory, but wait on Him. Remember the words of Psalm 27

The Lord is my light and my salvation;

Whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the strength of my life;

Of whom shall I be afraid?

So in your situation right now: Don't be afraid. Stay calm, be confident, and give the Lord time to work.

Exodus 14:26-29 Faith-Building By The Sea Shore

Rob Morgan

In our series of messages entitled God Will Make A Way, we're coming to the end of Exodus 14, that dramatic chapter in which God drives an invisible wedge through the waters of the Red Sea, parting them left and right, and allowing the Children of Israel to escape. Throughout that never-to-be-forgotten night, the Israelites flee from Egyptian troops across dry land between towering walls of water until every last one of them is safe on the other side. Then what? The last paragraph of the chapter says this:

/Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the Lord swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen--the

entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the great power the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses His servant (Exodus 14:26-29).

We don't always know all the reasons why God allows difficulty into our lives, but we can usually be pretty sure that He intends for these things to strengthen our faith for the future. Most of us will affirm that the periods of life in which we have most matured as people, most grown in wisdom, and most increased in faith have been the challenging periods.

Here, the children of Israel could say the same. The last verse of Exodus 14 ends the story by telling us that this incident was a great faith-booster for the Israelites. The Lord arranged the whole thing to show His children how powerful He was and to develop their faith to a level adequate to the great challenges that lay before them.

And the text says in the early morning hours on the eastern side of the Red Sea, the people feared the Lord greatly and put their trust in Him and in Moses, His servant. They believed. Their faith was strengthened for the future.

And that leads us to Red Sea Rule #9: View your current crisis as a faith-builder for the future. Let present problems strengthen your faith for tomorrow. Store up faith for times ahead.

Faith has a cumulative quality to it. We amass and garner faith, we grow in faith, as time goes by. As we evermore prove God's faithfulness to us, our faith grows stronger through the seasons of life.

Here in Exodus 14, the Lord clearly led the Israelites into a strait place, then gave them a deliberate, powerful manifestation of His power and deliverance at the beginning of their journey toward Canaan. Why? So they would have adequate measures of faith for the coming challenges of establishing a nation, conquering a land, and becoming His people.

We can consider all this in three ways this morning.

The Definition of Faith

First, let's think about the definition of faith. In the last few years, we've seen several American teenagers shot and killed for their faith in Jesus Christ. One of the most tragic events occurred last year in Fort Worth, Texas, when a gunman walked into Wedgewood Baptist Church during a student See You At The Pole rally. One of those shot and killed was a 14-year-old named Cassie Griffin. In reading a brief account of her life recently, I was surprised that she had adopted a personal mascot. A frog. She had frogs everywhere, frog trinkets, frog artwork, frog jewelry. It was her motto.

Having never known of anyone to be so interested in frogs before, I read on, intrigued. According to her dad and mom, the word **frog** meant something very special to her and it summarized her philosophy in life: F.R.O.G.--Fully Rely on God. And that's a marvelous definition of faith. Fully relying on God. As I study the Bible, I've found several other definitions of faith.

In Luke 1, the pregnant virgin Mary visited her relative Elizabeth, also pregnant. Elizabeth's baby leaped in the womb when Mary entered the house, and Elizabeth cried out: Why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished. What a great definition of faith: Believing that what the Lord has said to us will be accomplished.

Here's another one from the life of Abraham. Though he and his wife were aged, God had promised to give them a baby, a son. According to Romans 4:20-21, Abraham did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised.

That is the same definition in different words: Being fully persuaded that God has the power to do what He has promised.

Now look at how the same truth is expressed by the Apostle Paul during the terrible storm at sea that shipwrecked him in the Mediterranean. In Acts 27, during the worst of the tempest, the captain, crew, and passengers of the ship had given up. All hope for survival was gone, and they were in terror and suspense. But listen to what Paul told them in verses 21ff: After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' So keep up your courage men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as He told me."

What is faith? Believing that things will happen just as He has told us.

Look at yet another way of putting it. In Hebrews 11:11, again referring to Abraham, the writer says: By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered Him faithful who had made the promise.

What is faith? It is considering Him faithful who has given us certain promises.

So put all these together. What is faith?

- Believing that what the Lord has said to us will be accomplished.
- Being fully persuaded that God has the power to do what He has promised.
- Believing that things will happen just as He has told us.
- It is considering Him faithful who has given us certain promises

To put it simply, faith is making reasonable assumptions about God's care and control over our lives. We may not understand every circumstance and we may not like every event. Sometimes we're even backed up to the Red Sea with the Egyptians at our back. But God wants us to make the simple assumption that He is going to take care of us. He is going to keep His promises to us. He's going to make a way, even if He must part the waters to do it.

The Degrees of Faith

That leads us to our second consideration. The Bible teaches that there are degrees of faith. Faith is quantifiable. Some people's faith is turbo charged, some operates on one cylinder. As Jesus wandered around Palestine ministering, He had a sort of x-ray vision that could penetrate into a person's heart and measure their faith quotient. He was always measuring faith. He seemed intensely interested in the degree of faith being exercised by the people who crossed his path.

In Matthew 8, he met a Roman soldier, a centurion, who was willing to trust him for the healing of his servant. Mt 8:10 says: When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following Him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."

He made a similar comment in Matthew 15:26 about a woman who approached him regarding her diseased daughter. Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

But in Matthew 8, when He and His disciples panic during in a furious storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus rebukes them, saying, "You of little faith, what are you so afraid?"

And in Luke 24 after the Resurrection as Jesus walked along with the two disciples going to the village of Emmaus, He said to them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

So there are degrees of faith, and the clear teaching of the Bible is that Jesus keenly watches and richly rewards those who fully trust Him.

In Matthew 9, we read: So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."

Hebrews 11:6 says, Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

Years ago when I was working in a Billy Graham Crusade, Houston pastor John Bisango came to speak to us. Bisango describes a time when his daughter Melodye Jan, age 5, came to him and asked for a doll house. John promptly nodded and promised to build her one, then he went back to reading his book. Soon he glanced out the study window and saw her arms filled with dishes, toys, and dolls, making trip after trip until she had a great pile of playthings in the yard. He asked his wife what Melodye Jan was doing.

"Of, you promised to build her a doll house, and she believes you. She's just getting ready for it."

John said, "You could have thought I'd been hit by an atom bomb. I threw aside that book, raced to the lumber yard for supplies, and quickly built that little girl a doll house. Now why did I respond? Because I wanted to? No. Because she deserved it? No. Her daddy had given his word and she believed it and acted upon it. When I saw her faith, nothing could keep me from carrying out my word."

Brother Lawrence, the Carmelite mystic, said 400 years ago: The trust we put in God honors Him much and draws down great

graces.... When (God) finds a soul penetrated with a living faith, He pours into it His graces and favors plentifully; there they flow like a torrent...

The Development of Faith

That leads us to our third consideration, the development of faith. The disciples once came to the Lord Jesus with a simple four-word request: Lord, increase our faith. There was a man once who was deeply troubled about his troubled son, and he came to Jesus begging help. Jesus said, "Trust me." The man answered, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." In other words, "I have faith, but give me a greater faith. Help me to believe you more."

That is our heart-cry. Paul commended the church in Thessalonica for their growing faith. 2 Thessalonians 1:3 says, We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.

God is, after all, a God who grows things. None of us begin life fully grown. We began as a tiny speck, a single cell. It's a very marvelous cell, for all the characteristics of each person--sex, eye color, shoe size, intelligence, and so forth--are determined at fertilization by the baby's genetic code that resides in the 46 human chromosomes found in that one cell. But we begin microscopically small, then grow.

God is a God who grows things, and He designs for us to grow spiritually. He intends to develop our faith and joy and love and wisdom. And that's why He sent the Israelites to Canaan via the Red Sea. That's why He kept sending the disciples into those storms on Lake Gennesaret.

How does faith grow? God gives us truth in the Scripture, then He sends us tests. Notice this is how he worked with both the children of Israel and with the disciples. With Israel, He gave them instructions through Moses, then he brought them to the edge of the Red Sea, or He put them in a desert with no water, or He led them to a spot where there was no food, or He put giants in their pathway. And He said, "Now here's a test. Let's see if you can apply My promises to your problem."

Jesus did the same thing with His disciples. He taught them on the mountainside, then loaded them into a boat and deliberately sent them into a terrific storm. He was saying, so to speak, "Now here's a test. Let's see if you can apply the truth I've been teaching you to the storm you're facing."

The same is true for us. We come to church and hear the Word of God taught. We have our devotions, and we find Scriptures that feed our heart. Then the Lord sends some trial or trouble into our lives to give us an opportunity to develop our faith, to cling to His promises amid life's problems. As we trust Him and pass the test, we're strengthened for the future.

This, then, is the principle: Our faith grows when we choose to apply the promises of God to the problems of life and use the experiences to mature us for the future.

By coincidence, this week I've been reading through the classic book by Mrs. Howard Taylor entitled Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret. It tells the story of a young man named Hudson Taylor who made up his mind to grow strong in faith. Even as a young man, he chose to live amid hardship, proving God, trusting God to provide for his needs. As an adult, he went to China and attempted great things for God there, trusting the Lord to meet his needs and see him through.

Eventually J. Hudson Taylor established a missionary society for sending evangelists into the interior of China, and for several years the pressures of the China Inland Mission pressed upon him, wearing him down. His missionaries needed a constant stream of finances. They were frequently in danger of their lives, and often there were conflicts within the missionary family. Political problems faced him at every turn, including misunderstandings back in England that hit the headlines and maligned his cause. Meanwhile, Hudson had all the pressures of trying to raise his family in a strange and often hostile culture.

By his late-30s, he was nearly worn down. A deep, inner depression crept over him. His fatigue increased to dangerous levels, and so did his worry and discouragement.

Then on September 4, 1869, he received a letter from a fellow-missionary, John McCarthy. In his letter, McCarthy told of being deeply impressed with a passage from a book entitled Christ is All. The passage said: The Lord Jesus received is holiness begun; the Lord Jesus cherished is holiness advancing; the Lord Jesus counted upon as never absent would be holiness complete.... He is most holy who has most of Christ within, and joys most fully in the finished work. It is a defective faith which clogs the feet and causes many a fall.

McCarthy said in his letter: "Abiding, not striving nor struggling; looking oft unto Him; trusting Him for present power; ... resting in the love on an almighty Savior, in the joy of complete salvation 'from all sin'--this is not new, and yet 'tis new to me."

He continued: "How then to have our faith increased? Only by thinking of all that Jesus is and all His is for us: His life, His death, His

work, He Himself as revealed to us in the Word, to be the subject of our constant thoughts. Not a striving to have faith.... But a looking off to the Faithful One seems all we need; a resting in the Loved One entirely, for time and for eternity."

McCarthy's letter jolted Hudson Taylor like a thousand volts of electricity. It seemed as though he suddenly saw in a fresh way how all-faithful and all-present His Savior was, and how wonderful it is to be able to simply abide in Him.

Taylor later wrote to his sister, saying, "My mind has been greatly exercised for six or eight months past, feeling the need personally and for our Mission of more holiness, life, power in our souls. But personal need stood first and was the greatest. I felt the ingratitude, the danger, the sin of not living nearer to God. I prayed, agonized, fasted, strove, made resolutions, read the Word more diligently, sought more time for meditation, but all without avail...."

"I knew that if only I could abide in Christ all would be well, but I could not. I would begin the day in prayer, determined not to take my eye off Him for a moment, but pressure of duties, sometimes very trying, and constant interruptions apt to be so wearing, caused me to forget Him. Then one's nerves get so fretted... I strove for faith, but it would not come.

"When my agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy was used to remove the scales from my eyes, and the Spirit of God revealed to me the truth of our oneness with Jesus as I had never known before.... McCarthy...wrote: But how to get faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith, but by resting on the Faithful One. As I read, I saw it all!"

Taylor continued: "I am no longer anxious about anything, as I realize this; for He, I know, is able to carry out His will, and His will is mine. It makes no difference where He places me, or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me; for in the easiest position He must give me His grace, and in the most difficult His grace is sufficient. It little matters to my servant whether I send him to buy a few cash worth of things, or the most expensive articles. In either case he looks to me for the money and brings me his purchases. So, if God should place me in serious perplexity, must He not give me much guidance; in positions of great difficulty, much grace; in circumstances of great pressure and trial, much strength? No fear that resources will prove unequal to the emergency! And His resources are mine, for His is mine, and is with me and dwell in me.

"And since Christ has thus dwelt in my heart by faith, how happy I have been.... As to work--mine was never so plentiful, so responsible or so difficult, but the weight and strain are all gone. The last month or more has been, perhaps, the happiest of my life."

Others noticed the change in him as well. One of Hudson's co-workers described it this way: "He was a joyous man now, a bright happy Christian. He had been a toiling, burdened one before, with latterly not much rest of soul. It was rested in Jesus now, and letting Him do the work--which makes all the difference. Whenever he spoke in meetings after that, a new power seemed to flow from him. Troubles did not worry him as before. He cast everything on God in a new way, and gave more time to prayer. Instead of working late at night, he began to go to bed earlier, rising at 5 a.m. to give time to Bible study and prayer before the work of the day began."

What happened to Hudson Taylor? He chose to apply the promises of God to the problems of life, and he used the experiences to mature him for the future.

Faith, then, is simply making logical assumptions, being fully persuaded that God will do what He has promised. There are degrees of faith, and God is always testing our faith. The eyes of God are always measuring our degree of faith. And our faith grows as we choose to apply the promises of God to the problems of life, and use the experiences to mature us for the future.

As such, the Christian's constant prayer is well-put in the hymn of old William Bathurst:

O for a faith that will not shrink,
Tho' pressed by every foe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe!

That will not mummer nor complain
Beneath the chastening rod,
But, in the hour of grief and pain,
Will lean upon its God;

A faith that shines more bright and clear
When tempests rage without
That when in danger knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt.

[\(O, for a Faith That Will Not Shrink\)](#)

DEUTERONOMY 18:15-18 A PROPHET LIKE ME

Rob Morgan

The story of the Exodus is one of the best-known and most-loved stories in the Bible, thanks, in part, to Hollywood. There have been at least three major motion pictures devoted to it. The first was a 1923 silent version by Cecil B. De Mille entitled "The Ten Commandments." The second was De Mille's 1956 version starring Charlton Heston. More recently was the animated classic "Moses Prince of Egypt," with Val Kilmer supplying the voice of Moses.

Well, today I would like to talk about Moses, Prince of Egypt. Someone once wrote this about the biblical hero of the Exodus: The life of Moses presents a series of striking antitheses. He was the child of a slave, and the son of a queen. He was born in a hut, and lived in a palace. He inherited poverty, and enjoyed unlimited wealth. He was the leader of armies, and the keeper of flocks. He was the mightiest of warriors, and the meekest of men. He was educated in the court, and dwelt in the desert. He had the wisdom of Egypt, and the faith of a child. He was fitted for the city, and wandered in the wilderness. He was tempted with the pleasures of sin, and endured the hardships of virtue. He was backward in speech, yet talked with God. He had the rod of a shepherd, and the power of the Infinite. He was a fugitive from Pharaoh, and an ambassador from heaven. He was the giver of the Law, and the forerunner of grace. He died alone on Mt. Moab, but appeared with Christ at the transfiguration in Judea.

No wonder he is one of the heroes of Scripture with whom we are so intrigued. Well today, I'd like for us to think about this man Moses in a way that we have perhaps never before done. I want us to consider the parallels between the Prince of Egypt and the King of Kings. Today I would like to suggest that Moses was a biblical, God-intentioned prototype of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Even though this message is coming in our series based on the book of Exodus, I am taking our text from the book of Deuteronomy, three books over. Deuteronomy is composed of a series of sermons Moses gave to the younger Israelites before they crossed over into the Promised Land. Read with me this passage from Deuteronomy 18:15-18:

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the Lord our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die."

The Lord said to me: "What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him."

Look at Deuteronomy 18:15 again. It tells us several things about the coming Lord Jesus Christ: The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.

He Was Sent by God

Those words spoken by Moses comprise a clear messianic prediction, and the first thing we learn about the coming Christ from this verse is that he was especially prepared and sent by the Lord our God. Moses said, "The Lord our God will raise up for you a prophet..." The term "raise up" means "will prepare" and "to send." Moses was perfectly prepared by God for his role of redemption. He was born of Jewish blood, raised in Pharaoh's palace, and trained in all the wisdom of Egypt. He had incredible natural leadership abilities, there was a divine call upon his life, and at the right time God sent him to deliver the Jews from affliction. In the same way, Jesus Christ was perfectly prepared, equipped, and sent to redeem us from sin. Jesus said, "I seek not to please myself but him who sent me." In John 18:37 he said, "For this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world..."

He Is a Prophet

Second, Jesus is a prophet. Our verse in Deuteronomy 18 says, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me..." And from this point on in Jewish history—from the giving of this prophecy—the children of Abraham looked for a great coming Prophet who would be the Messiah. They took this prediction very seriously, and from generation to generation they kept waiting for the great, coming Prophet who would be a second Moses. Let me show you how this shows up in the New Testament:

- In John 1:19, John the Baptist had burst on the scene with such commotion that Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." They asked him, "Then who are you?" "Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered "No." Notice that the Jews were looking for someone called "the Prophet." The asking of that question was based on their knowledge of Deuteronomy 18. They were waiting for the great, coming Prophet who would be sent by God. In verse 25, they asked John, Why then do you baptize if you are not Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet.

- In John 6:14, we get a glimpse of the same thing: After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."
- In John 7:40, after hearing the Lord teach about the water of life, the multitudes were amazed at his authority. On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet." They were harkening back to the prediction in Deuteronomy 18.
- In Acts 3, the apostle Peter healed a lame man at the temple gates, and the sensation caused a multitude to congregate. Peter preached them a tremendous sermon, saying in Acts 3:17ff: Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. So here we have direct and clear New Testament confirmation that the Deuteronomy 18 passage is indeed a Messianic prediction regarding Jesus Christ.
- Just to make sure we don't miss the point, Stephen repeats it for us in Acts 7 in his ill-fated sermon before the Jewish ruling council. After referring to events in the book of Exodus, Stephen said in verse 37: This is that Moses who told the Israelites, "God will send you a prophet like me from your own people." And with those words, Stephen preached to them Jesus.

He Is Like Moses

The third thing that we can learn about Jesus is that there are a series of remarkable parallels between Himself and the lawgiver Moses. The verse in Deuteronomy 18 says, The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me.... It is repeated in verse 18: I will raise up for them a prophet like you....

This brings us now to the heart of our study. In what ways was the lawgiver Moses analogous to the Lord Jesus Christ? There are several points of comparison. Let's begin by going back to Stephen's speech. Acts 7:20 says, "At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child."

- Both Moses and Jesus were the infant sons of Jewish peasants.
- Both, as it turned out, were of royal lineage, heirs to a throne.
- Both were hidden from rulers who were killing Jewish baby boys.
- Both emerged out of Egypt, even as the Bible says, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."
- Both grew up hidden from our view in Scripture. We can talk about the hidden childhood years of both of them.
- Both left the splendor of royalty to identify with their own people and suffer affliction with them.
- Both were rejected at first by the very people they had come to deliver. Moses was spurned by the Jewish slaves who ridiculed his efforts to free them. And Jesus came unto his own and his own received them not.
- Both became shepherds.
- Both became miracle workers. Moses was one of the few prophets who performed miracles in the Bible, turning the Nile into blood, parting the waters of the Red Sea, and so forth. Likewise, the Lord Jesus Christ was a performer of miracles, turning water into wine, healing the sick, and raising the dead.
- Both talked with God face to face. The last paragraph of Deuteronomy says: "Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel." No one, that is, until Jesus.
- Both had outstanding character qualities. Numbers 12:3 says, "Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth." And in Matthew 11:29 says, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."
- There are numerical parallels. Moses was 40 days and nights on Mount Sinai; Jesus prepared for his ministry for 40 days and nights on the Mount of Temptation. Moses was surrounded by twelve tribes; Jesus was surrounded by twelve apostles. Moses was assisted by 70 elders. Jesus sent out his 70 workers two-by-two.
- Both men were mediators, standing in the gap between God and Man. In Exodus 32, the children of Israel so terribly sinned in the

matter of the golden calf that God seemed prepared to wipe them from the face of the earth. But Moses fell on his face and interceded for them, and even said, in effect, "Lord, if you will not forgive the sin of this my people then blot my name also out of your book." In other words, Moses stood between the sins of his people and the wrath of a holy God, saying, "Punish me!" That is exactly what Jesus Christ did. 1 Timothy 2:5 says: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men."

- Both redeemed their people out of bondage and slavery by the blood of a slain lamb.
- Both stand at the head of God's great programs for humility—Moses in the giving of the law; and Jesus Christ as the giver of grace. John 1:17 says, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."
- Finally, both men were faithful to the Heavenly Father, and both call us to be faithful to that selfsame God.

It's put this way in Hebrews 3: Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

A. B. Simpson wrote: The work of Moses was typical of the great work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the founder of Judaism; so Christ was the Founder of Christianity. He gave Israel the law; so Jesus has given us the Gospel. He was the great prophet of the old dispensation; so Christ is of the new. He was the deliverer of his people from Egypt; so Christ is our Redeemer. He was the founder of the system of sacrificial offerings; so Christ is the great Sacrifice. He was the builder of the Tabernacle; so Christ Himself is the true sanctuary; He was the mediator between God and Israel; so Jesus is our one way of access to the Father. Yet Moses was but the figure of Him who was to come. When Jesus appeared on earth, Moses came to the Mount of Transfiguration and laid his testimony at the feet of Jesus, acknowledging Him as the true substance and end of all his glorious dispensation while the voice from heaven proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him." No voice so loudly as Moses' witnessed to the preeminence and glory of Christ. And in all the preaching of Christ and His apostles, they always began with Moses as they unfolded the things concerning Him in the ancient Scriptures. And the song of redemption on the shores of the sea of glass, at last, shall have as its deepest note, the song of Moses blending with the song of the Lamb.

He Was From Among His Brothers

The fourth thing we learn about Jesus from our verse in Deuteronomy 18 is that he was raised up from among his brothers. The verse says: The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers....

And so it was that God the Son took upon Himself flesh and blood. Hebrews 2:11 says, "Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers."

He is to be Obeyed

The final thing we learn from Deuteronomy 18:15 is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is to be obeyed. The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.

There are two books of the Bible, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, that use a particular word to describe Christians who take lightly their obligations of consistent obedience to Christ, and that word is "backsliding." The very term "backsliding" implies that we are in continual danger of sliding back into a careless, sinful way of life.

Someone once said, "No one is so empty as the person who has stopped walking with God and doesn't know it."

Theodore Epp once said, "Backsliding starts in such a subtle way that most of us are not aware of it, and many of us may be backslidden and may not realize it."

Samson is an example of a man in the Bible who was out of touch with God and didn't even recognize it. The Bible says, Samson "wist (realized) not that the Lord had departed from him."

I wonder if someone here may be in the same condition. Back up in East Tennessee where I grew up, we sometimes had trouble with the neighbor's cows. They would stray away and end up in our property, sometimes in our very back yard. The cow didn't intentionally get lost, but it just sort of happened. She would start nibbling on a tuft of green grass, and when she finished she looked ahead to the next tuft of green grass and started nibbling on that one, and then she nibbled of a tuft of grass right next to a hole in the fence. Then it saw another tuft of green grass on the other side of the fence, and before long it had nibbled its way into being

lost.

Most of us don't deliberately set out to backslide or to disobey our Lord. It's just that our appetites and desires and carelessness lead us from one thing to another until we nibble ourselves through the fence and off the straight and narrow way. It's an unhealthy and a dangerous place to be, and not at all as desirable as it may seem at the time. God requires our obedience to his Word.

In Deuteronomy 18, He predicted the coming of one greater than Moses, and it came to pass exactly as he predicted. He said, "I will raise up for you a prophet like Moses from among the brothers. You must listen to what he says. You must obey him."

And thus it happened exactly so, that God sent us Christ; and we must obey him, Prince of Egypt, Prince of Peace, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Exodus 12 Meeting God At Midnight

Rob Morgan

Katrina and I recently watched, on the television program "America's Castles," a tour of the Winchester House in San Jose, California--a strange house with an incredible story.

In 1862, at the height of the Civil War, Oliver Winchester married Sarah Pardee of New Haven, Connecticut. Oliver Winchester is the man who invented the Winchester rifle, the first true repeating rifle, and it was put to great use by the Union Army during the War. Because of that, he amassed an incredible fortune, making the young couple rich beyond belief. Four years later, they gave birth to a little girl named Annie, but the baby died when about two weeks old, and Sarah was so shattered that she withdrew into herself and nearly lost her mind. Several years later, William himself developed tuberculosis and died. Sarah became heir of a vast fortune, but no amount of money would assuage her grief. She possessed no answer to the death or loneliness that overwhelmed her.

At a friend's suggestion, Sarah sought help from a spiritist. During one of the sessions, the medium said, "Your husband is here. He says there is a curse on your family, which took his life and that of your child. It is a curse that has resulted from the terrible weapon created by the Winchester family. Thousands of persons have died because of it and their spirits are now seeking vengeance." Sarah was told that she, too, would soon die unless she sold out in New Haven and moved West. She would be guided by her husband who would tell her where to stop and build a house. "You must build a home for yourself and for the spirits who have fallen from this terrible weapon. You can never stop building the house. If you continue building, you will live. Stop and you will die."

Sarah accordingly sold her home in New Haven, left family and friends, and moved west with her boundless fortune. Finally she reached a spot near San Jose where she found a 17-room house under construction on 162 acres of land. She purchased the house, tossed away the plans, and started building whatever she chose. For 36 years her workers built and rebuilt, altered and changed, constructed and demolished one section of the house after another. The sounds of hammers and saws sounded day and night. Railway cars brought in supplies, and every morning Sarah met with her foreman to sketch out new building plans. Rooms were added to rooms, wings were added to wings, levels were turned into towers and peaks. Staircases led nowhere. Doors opened to nothing. Closets opened to blank walls. Hallways doubled back upon themselves. The house became a vast, expensive maze, designed to confuse the evil spirits that tormented her.

Sarah was intrigued with the number 13, and nearly all the windows contained 13 panels of glass; the walls had 13 panels, the greenhouse had 13 cupolas, the staircases had 13 steps, and the rooms had 13 windows. The floor plan was so confused that it took many years to determine the exact number of rooms, because every time they counted them they came up with a different number.

Sarah Winchester depleted her fortune by building and rebuilding, modeling and remodeling, innovating and renovating her vast, confusing, sprawling, unplanned mansion. She believed that as long as she continued building, she would stay alive.

But she didn't. On the night of September 4, 1922, after a conference session with the spirits in the séance room, Sarah went to her bedroom and died in her sleep at age 83.

You can never build walls against death. You can't shut yourself away from the death angel. There is only one way on this spinning earth to escape the gloom of death and the terrors of the tomb. There is only one way to live everlastingly, to live with eternal hope, and that is through the Passover Lamb, which we read about in the book of Exodus 12:

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.... The

animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses when they eat the lambs... This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover.

On the same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you...

Perhaps you are familiar with the story of the Exodus. The nation of Israel had been enslaved by the Pharaohs of Egypt, and Moses had come to deliver them. He had challenged Pharaoh to "Let my people go!" Pharaoh had refused and he had paid the price for it. He and his people had suffered a series of devastating, divinely-sent plagues. Still Pharaoh had refused. And now, finally, the tenth plague was about to fall across Egypt—the death of the firstborn of every family. And on this night Pharaoh would capitulate.

After 430 years, the final night of slavery and bondage was coming to an end for the Israelites. Hurriedly, Moses told the Israelites that every Jewish home must slay a lamb and coat the doorposts with its blood. So that evening, every family in Israel took a lamb, perfect and pure, and slaughtered it, for the Lord had said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." They met God at midnight at doorposts stained with blood.

On the corner of the square in Rotterdam, Holland there once stood a house known as the House of Terrors. The name comes from the 1500s when King Philip II of Spain, an arch-Roman Catholic, came against the Protestants of Holland, sending the Duke of Alba to slaughter them. Spanish troops went house to house throughout Rotterdam, searching out Protestants and killing them. In this one particular house, a handful of men, women, and children heard the soldiers approaching. They heard the pounding of doors, the screams of victims, and the marching of feet coming toward them. Terror gripped their hearts.

But a young man suddenly got an idea. He took a goat in the house, killed it, and swept its blood under the doorway out onto the street. When the soldiers reached the house, they saw blood flowing from under the door, and, assuming their compatriots had already taken care of the job in that house, they went their way.

Exodus 12 says, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." Of course, we're curious about why it must be that way. Why was a Passover Lamb necessary? What was its meaning and significance?

Why A Passover Lamb?

There is a profound spiritual law built into the very fabric of the universe. It is illustrated for us here in Exodus 12, but we find it clearly stated in Leviticus 17. You know, when God created the universe He built into it many different, orderly laws, necessary for its health and happiness. I read an article a year ago in the New York Times, written by a scientist who was speculating how a universe (which supposedly came into existence through a random explosion) could be so guided and governed by consistent mathematical laws. Well, the Lord built these laws into the warp and woof of the universe, and they make life possible. Just as God built into the universe mathematical and scientific laws, so he made the universe to be governed by moral and spiritual laws.

The fundamental spiritual law that we see illustrated so vividly here in Exodus 12 is stated for us more clearly in Leviticus 17:11, one of the great but little-known verses in the Bible. It says: For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.

Trucks and Tanks

The first part of the verse says that the life of the flesh is in the blood. Let me illustrate it this way: Municipal areas require well-organized delivery and defense systems. Almost every part of a city requires supplies, such as water, food, dry goods, and factory orders on a constant basis. These supplies must be delivered through a transportation system consisting of thousands of trucks with access to every part of the city through a complex of freeways, highways, streets, and alleys. The trucks transport supplies along city streets to stores and homes, while other trucks remove waste and allow the city to function and thrive.

Our bodies also have a transportation system so complex and complete that it dwarfs that of a metropolis. The body's transportation system cuts through every tissue and organ by means of a network of 60,000 miles of blood vessels. No cell of your body lies more than a hair's breadth from a blood capillary. The center of this vast system is a pump the size of an apple or a fist, that pumps 2,000 gallons of blood through its chambers every day, sending blood to every part of the body. The blood carries vital, life-giving oxygen and nutrients to every cell in the body.

We have two kinds of blood cells—red ones and white ones. The white blood cells are like billions of little tanks protecting the body from invading diseases. There are five different kinds of these white blood cells, and each one is trained to go after a different

enemy. One drop of blood can contain anywhere from 7000 to 25,000 white blood cells, and the number of them increases when our body is fighting an illness, just like the government calling up the reserves.

The body's 25 trillion red blood cells, meanwhile, are like little UPS trucks carrying all sorts of packages (such as oxygen) that are needed by the cells in the body. Every cell in the body requires oxygen to remain alive. If the blood is cut off to any part of the body, it deprives that part of the body of oxygen, and that bodily part will die. If the brain is deprived of oxygen, the brain dies and thus the body dies. The blood is the essence of life. Someone called it "the River of Life."

Thirty-five hundred years ago, God told us, "The life is in the blood." Leviticus 17:11 says: For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.

In other words, in the moral and spiritual laws of this universe, God stipulated that the blood of an innocent lamb could atone for sin. When Jesus Christ began his ministry, he was introduced by John the Baptist, not as the Prince of Peace or the Messiah of Old. He was introduced as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." The Passover Lamb of Exodus 12 was a prophetic, divinely-appointed foreshadowing, a type, of the coming Christ. And when Jesus Christ died, the life-giving blood drained from his body, providing forgiveness and life to all who believe.

Acts 20:28 says: ...take heed to yourselves and to all the flock... the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Romans 3:25, referring to Jesus Christ, says ...whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood...

Ephesians 1:7 says, In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace...

Hebrews 9 goes into considerable detail: Into the (holy of holies) the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins... But Christ came as High Priest... not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead words to serve the living God? ... without the shedding of blood there is no remission.

1 Peter 1:18ff says ...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct..., but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

1 John 1:7 - ...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Revelation 1:5 - To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood...

Revelation 5:9 - ...for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your own blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

Have you every considered this? Everything about the death of Christ was bloody—the slapping of his face must have cut his face; the scourge ripped apart his back; the crown of thorns pierced his brow; blood from his hands and ankles spurted with every blow of the hammer; blood likely oozed from his nose and mouth as he writhed on the cross; blood and water gushed from his side when the lance tore him open. It was not a bloodless death. It was a death designed to paint the cross crimson.

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath the flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

[\(There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood\)](#)

His Own Blood

In an article in Christianity Today, Dr. Paul Brand shares an experience from his early days in India as a missionary physician. He arrived as an orthopedic surgeon at the Christian Medical College in Vellore to work alongside a famous surgeon, Dr. Reeve Bretts from Boston. The doctors in Vellore were vexed over the unwillingness of most Indians to donate blood. "To them," Brand wrote, "blood is life, and who can tolerate the thought of giving up lifeblood, even to save someone else?" Sometimes, parents were unwilling to donate blood even to save the lives of their own children.

One day a 12-year-old girl was admitted to the hospital, suffering from a very bad lung. Only the removing of her lung would save her life. The surgery required at least three pints of blood. Since the hospital had two pints, only one pint was required from the family. After huddling, the family pooled their money and offered to buy the additional pint.

With his patience running out, Dr. Bretts explained that there was no blood to be bought, and no other source for blood. The family might as well take the girl back home and let her die. The family huddled again and finally pushed forward a frail old grandmother, weighing perhaps 95 pounds, the smallest and weakest member of the family. Dr. Brand later recalled: Reeve fixed a stare on the sleek, well-fed men who had made the decision and then his anger took over. The bald spot atop his head turned blazing red. In halting but more-than-expressive Tamil he blasted the dozen or so cowering family members. Few could understand his American accent, but everyone nearby caught the force of his torrent of words as he jabbed his finger back and forth from the husky men to the frail woman.

Finally, with a melodramatic flourish, Reeve rolled up his own sleeves and called over to me, "Come on, Paul—I can't stand this! I won't let that poor girl die just because of these cowardly fellows. Bring the needle and bottle and take my blood." The family fell silent like birds before an eclipse, and watched in awe as I dutifully fastened a cuff around Reeve's upper arm, swabbed the skin, and plunged the needle into his vein. A rich red fountain spurted into the bottle and a great "Ahhh!" rustled through the family and spectators.

At once there was a great babble of voices. "Look, the sahib doctor is giving his own life!"

That is a picture of the Gospel. You and I are facing death, judgment, and hell because of our wayward sin and inborn disobedience. We're broken God's moral and spiritual laws, and we have all sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. But 3400 years ago, the Lord stipulated that the blood of the Passover Lamb can atone for sin. And so the Passover Lamb was slain on Calvary. The Great Physician gave his own blood. And the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord cleanses from all sin.

What can wash away our sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can make us whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

O, precious is the flow
That makes us white as snow,
No other fount I know;
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

(Nothing but the Blood)

Exodus 14:1-2 BETWIXT THE SWORD AND THE SEA

Rob Morgan

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon -- Exodus 14:1-2

I'm panic prone, sorry to say. Given to anxiety. Every new emergency launches me into a state of hysteria. A few years ago, for example, I was standing in our front yard with a friend who is a fire-fighter and paramedic. A car roared past, lost control, sailed through the air, and landed on its roof. While I jumped around like a maniac, my friend calmly took charge, called for help, and extracted the driver, who, as it turned out, was rattled but unhurt. "How did you manage to stay so calm?" I later asked.

"I don't know," he said with a shrug. "After a while you just learn to do what you have to do."

I haven't learned yet. Some time ago, our family moved into a new house. It was a cold night, and we switched on our new heating system. No one had told us there might be a slight, initial burning odor in the ducts. When the smoke detector blared and I whiffed a burning smell, my heart started pounding like a kettledrum. I flew through the house, screaming for everyone flee in their underwear and nightclothes. Racing to the phone, I tried to dial the emergency number, but in my confusion I punched 411 instead and was puzzled when the operator calmly asked, "What listing would you like?"

I yelled, "What's the number for 911?"

We are, after all, likened in the Bible to sheep. I have a small flock of sheep myself--well, three of them--who live contentedly in our extended back yard. They're well-fenced, well-fed, and have little to fear. But they sometimes fear anyway and can bolt in sheer panic at nothing more than a rabbit jumping through the grass.

That isn't a quality the Lord admires in his sheep. He wants us to say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil...." Why, then, am I continually fearing evil? Or, put differently, why do some of us seem especially vulnerable to anxiety? Why do we worry so? From God's perspective it isn't rational. Consider this about the Children of Israel as they approached the Red Sea.

Witnessing God's Power in the Plagues (Exodus 1-12)

First, they had witnessed God's power in the plagues that struck the Egyptians in Exodus 1-12. For over four hundred years the Israelites had suffered bondage in Egypt, baking bricks, building cities, withering under sun and lash. But the Lord heard their groans and sent Moses to raise his staff over the Nile Delta. Ten devastating plagues--frogs, flies, darkness, hail, death--came in quick succession and at length conquered Pharaoh, a self-appointed god, tyrant, task-master, lord of the land. The Israelites had watched firsthand God's unleashed fist, seen His fury, His power over the land, sky, and sea--and over the most powerful man on earth.

His wonders are displayed wherever we turn our eye. He who made the moon and stars also changes lives, transforms homes, redeems souls, heals diseases, and bestows His gifts far and wide.

"You shall be my witnesses," said Jesus. That doesn't just mean we share what we witness, but that we have witnessed what we're sharing.

Experiencing God's Pardon in the Passover (Exodus 12)

Second, the children of Israel had experienced God's pardon in the Passover. In Exodus 13, the entire nation had paused to observe the Feast of Passover. Exodus 12 describes this Hebrew ritual that, through the slaying of an unblemished lamb, pointed to Calvary. Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you... (Exodus 12:13).

When John the Baptist introduced Jesus Christ at the Jordan, he didn't say, "Behold, the Messiah," or "Behold, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords." He pointed back to the Passover, saying, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

When we come to Jesus Christ, confessing our sins and inviting Him into our lives as Savior and Lord, we are instantly and fully pardoned of all moral failure in our lives, and are thereby reconciled to God by grace through faith. The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin.

That, in turn, leads to an awareness of God's perpetual presence within and around us.

Accompanied By God's Presence in the Pillar of Cloud and Fire (Exodus 13)

In Israel's case, having witnessed the plagues and observed the Passover, they found themselves marching out of Egypt under Divine Escort. Exodus 13 says, So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the Israelites went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt.... And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people (Ex 13:18, 21-22).

In other words, God's presence was real, intense, immediate, and continual. His presence is no less real to us. B. H. Carroll, in his old commentary on Exodus, pictured it like this. In the nighttime, he said, the pillar appeared as a great column of brilliant light, brighter than any electric light ever seen, and all night long its radiance brightly illuminated the entire camp, so no night ever touched them for forty years. In the morning, the pillar of fire became a cloud, spreading over the Israelites, shielding them from the withering rays of the sun, giving them refreshing shade by day. Carroll then said something to this effect: We see the last of this pillar when the Israelites reach the Promised Land--or at least, we think we do. But that cloud then became the Shekinah Glory that fell upon the Ark of the Covenant. It later descended onto the temple of Solomon. After the destruction of the temple, it cascaded on the Lord Jesus at His baptism, and later it came fell upon His new temple, the church, like a ball of fire. The Presence now indwells every believer, so that Christ is in us and we are in Him.

Christ is us? We in Him? How can that be? A young disciple once walked along the sea wondering about that, questioning how we can simultaneously be in Christ and Christ in us. His companion, an older Christian, picked up a bottle, filled it with saltwater, popped in the cork, and threw it into the ocean. "There now," he said. "The sea is in the bottle and the bottle is in the sea." His lesson was this: When we come by faith to Jesus Christ, confessing Him as Lord and Savior, He takes up residence within us by His Spirit, and at the same time His transcendent presence surrounds us.

Jesus knew that after His departure His disciples would find themselves facing endless pressures and problems, so He reassured them with His these final words in Matthew's Gospel: Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

When the Philippians found themselves in distress, Paul reminded them, Never forget the nearness of your Lord. Don't worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail... (Philippians 4:5-6, Phillips).

Psalm 78:23 says, But as for me, the nearness of God is my good (NASV).

All forsook me...said Paul at his defense before the Roman Emperor, but the Lord stood with me and strengthened me (2 Timothy 4:16-17).

Though invisible, the presence of God within and around the Christian is no less real than the pillar of fire and cloud that surrounded the Israelites. "His center is everywhere," said Henry Law, "His circumference is nowhere."

Or as A. W. Tozer put it: "The practice of the presence of God consists not of projecting an imaginary object from within (our) own minds and then seeking to realize its presence; it is rather to recognize the real presence of the One whom all sound theology declares to be already there."

In his classic little book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, 17th century Christian Nicholas Herman (better known as "Brother Lawrence") wrote, "Were I a preacher, I should, above all other things, preach the practice of the presence of God." He suggested that the practice of consciously and frequently reminding ourselves of the Lord's abiding presence around us will eventually, if attempted diligently, become habitual, and soon thereafter become natural.

My mother would agree. After my father's death, she struggled with loneliness and intense feelings of incompleteness. Her rambling house in the mountains seemed hollow and vacant. Then, as time passed, she grew more aware of the Lord's presence. Recently she told me, "I've adjusted nicely to living alone, for I'm never been so sure I'm not alone. The Lord and I talk together all day. When I wake up in the morning, He's waiting to greet me, and when I got to bed at night, He stays up and stands guard."

Someone once asked evangelist Dwight Moody how he managed to remain so intimate in his relationship with Christ. He replied, "I have come to Him as the best friend I have ever found, and I can trust Him in that relationship. I have believed He is Savior; I have believed He is God; I have believed His atonement on the cross is mine, and I have come to Him and submitted myself on my knees, surrendered everything to Him, and got up and stood by His side as my friend, and there isn't any problem in my life, there isn't any uncertainty in my work but I turn and speak to Him as naturally as to someone in the same room, and I have done it these years because I can trust Jesus."

So here in Exodus 14, we have a large contingent of excited souls, newly delivered, who have witnessed God's power in the plagues, experienced God's pardon through the Passover, and are being escorted by God's presence in the form of a pillar of fire and cloud. They are blessed beyond measure--recipients of heaven's richest gifts.

And yet they are hardly out of Egypt when they find themselves in an excruciating situation, facing problems that defy solution. They are betwixt sword and sea. Can't go forward, can't go backward. Trapped between Pharaoh's swords and the deadly waters of the Red Sea. Facing the slaughter of their children. Panicked. Confused. And in the distant clouds of dust, chariots of death are riding inexorably toward them.

Are they in God's will? Yes. Have they followed Him step-by-step? Absolutely. And yet, this. How can we explain it?

Well, it brings us Red Sea Rule Number 1: When you find yourself in a hard place, realize the Lord has either put you there or allowed you to be there.

Recently I read the remarkable story of Russell and Darlene Deibler, who, on their first wedding anniversary, August 18, 1938, arrived in New Guinea for missionary service. They began laboring in the jungles, enduring great hardship for the cause of Christ. But shortly afterward, the Japanese invaded the East Indies, the couple was torn apart, and Russell was interred in a concentration camp where he died.

Darlene herself was imprisoned in a military camp with 1600 other women and children, and there she suffered anguishing years of forced labor and indignity, near starvation, and the ravages of beriberi, malaria, dysentery, and intestinal worms. One day she was singled out for apparent execution. Shock troops took her to a death camp and directed her toward a stark cell. On the door were written in chalk the words *Orang ini musti mati*, "This person must die." The guards unlocked the door, opened it, and shoved her inside. The door slammed shut, and Darlene fell on her knees to peer in desperation through the keyhole. When she saw the key make a complete revolution, she knew she was on death row.

The footsteps of the guard receded, and she fell backward in a cold sweat, trembling, fighting off sheer terror. But suddenly she found herself singing a song she had learned as a little girl in Sunday School back in Iowa:

Fear not, little flock

Whatever your lot,
He enters all rooms,
The doors being shut.
He never forsakes,
He never is gone,
So count on His presence
From darkness 'till dawn.

Darlene felt God tenderly wrapping His strong arms around her, and she knew that though her captors could lock her in, they could not lock her wonderful Lord out.

She was in an impossible spot, but she was there with a God who does impossible things. She was there in His will, and she knew His will would never put her where His presence could not sustain her.

This is repeatedly borne out in Scripture. Consider these men and women who, through no fault of their own and while earnestly trying to follow God's will, found themselves beset with soul-crippling difficulties:

- Abel, trying to worship God as honestly as possible, was physically and fatally attacked by his older brother.
- Abraham, hearing the voice of God, was commanded to kill his own, only-begotten son.
- Hagar, young, frightened--a single mom--was forced into the desert with her boy, where both were expected to perish from dehydration.
- Joseph, wanting to fulfill God's glorious dreams for his life, was seized, stripped, sold as a slave, and wrongly imprisoned in Egypt.
- Jacob, trying to save his family from starvation, was forced to relinquish his beloved Benjamin. "All these things are against me," he sighed.
- Moses was caught between the splendors of Egyptian royalty and the thanklessness of affliction with the people of God.
- David, having been anointed by Samuel, was pursued for years by Israeli soldiers sent to destroy him.
- The devout woman in 2 Kings 4, widow of a prophet, suffered such privation and poverty that creditors came to seize her sons for slaves.
- At the height of his ministry, Ezekiel's wife suddenly died from a stroke, yet he was commanded by God to neither mourn nor weep for her.
- Hezekiah and his people, seeking revival, were trapped behind their own city walls by the most powerful army on earth bent on annihilating them.
- Two devoted sisters, Mary and Martha, sent Jesus an urgent message about their brother's illness, but He deliberately tarried until Lazarus languished and died.
- The Lord's disciples set sail with Him on the Sea of Galilee only to face a night of straining at the oars, battling mountainous waves.
- The Son of Man Himself, fulfilling the Father's Will, was nailed fast to wood and left to hang by his hands until dead.
- The apostles, trying to preach this Crucified One, were seized up by Jewish officials and whipped until the lashers were exhausted.

The leader of that apostolic band later told his readers: "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you" (1 Peter 4:12). In other words, Christians shouldn't be too surprised when, in sincerely seeking to do God's will, they find ourselves trapped in painful, frightening, difficult, or impossible situations. Life is hard--especially for Christians, for we have a determined enemy prowling around like a roaring lion seeking to devour us. That is the whole tenor of Scripture.

In this world," Jesus warned his followers in John 16:33, "you will have tribulation." Then He added: "But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." God allows our faith to be tried, and He permits suffering, trials, and troubles to crowd into our lives.

Sometimes they seem more than we can bear. But Christ can bear them, and the first step toward Parted Waters is to remind ourselves frequently that the Lord has either put us in this difficult place or allowed us to be there for reasons currently unknown but by Him.

I've often wondered why my wife developed multiple sclerosis just as our children were leaving the nest. We had hoped to spend the last half of our marriage enjoying certain long-anticipated activities--like traveling or golfing--that are now, as it turns out, difficult or impossible. But God has a purpose, and as hymnist William Cowper put it:

His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.
Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs and works His sovereign will.
His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.
Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs and works His sovereign will.

[\(God Moves in a Mysterious Way\)](#)

Years ago, I found a poem I've never forgotten. It was in a classic little volume by V. Raymond Edman entitled *The Disciplines of Life*. The untitled and unattributed verse put it like this:

When God wants to drill a man,
And thrill a man,
And skill a man
To play the noblest part;
When he yearns with all His heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall be amazed,
Watch His methods, watch His ways!

How He ruthlessly perfects
Whom He royally elects!
How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him
Into trial shapes of clay which
Only God understands;
While his tortured heart is crying
And he lifts beseeching hands!

How He bends but never breaks
When his good He undertakes;
How He uses whom He chooses,
And with every purpose fuses him;
By every act induces him
To try His splendor out--
God knows what He's about.

There are no mistakes in God's plan. Tozer said, "To the child of God, there is no such thing as an accident. He travels an appointed way.... Accidents may indeed appear to befall him and misfortune stalk his way; but these evils will be so in appearance only and will seem evils only because we cannot read the secret script of God's hidden providence."

Everything I've been saying in this chapter is perfectly summed up in an incident in the life of South African pastor Andrew Murray, who once faced a terrible crisis. Gathering himself into his study, he sat a long while quietly, prayerfully, thoughtfully. His mind flew at last to his Lord Jesus, and picking up his pen, he wrote these words in his journal:

First, He brought me here, it is by His will that I am in this strait place: in that fact I will rest.

Next, He will keep me here in His love, and give me grace to behave as His child.

Then, He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn, and working in me the grace He means to bestow.

Last, in His good time He can bring me out again--how and when He knows.

Let me say I am here,

1. By God's appointment
2. In His keeping,
3. Under His training,
4. For His time.

Remember the times you have witnessed God's power? Experienced His pardon? Enjoyed His presence? He has promised never to leave you or forsake you. So if you now find yourself in a hard place, remember: You are there by God's appointment, in His keeping, under His training, and for His time.

And, all evidence to the contrary, there's no better place to be.

Exodus 14:19-20 Envision The Enveloping God

Rob Morgan

And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all the night (Exodus 14:19-20).

Over 100 years ago, the far-famed British preacher Charles Spurgeon stood in his pulpit and preached a message from this chapter, Exodus 14, about the Children of Israel at the Red Sea. He told his London congregation: The Lord will make a way for you where no foot has been before. That which, like a sea, threatens to drown you, shall be a highway for your escape.

That has been the theme of our current sequence of sermons from the same chapter and from the same story. God will make a way. The One who created the heavens and the earth, who has planned all our days, and who knows when even a sparrow falls will make a way for you. He promised in Isaiah 43:18: "I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert" (Isaiah 43:18, KJV).

"Never give up praying," the apostle Paul told the Colossian Christians. "And when you pray, keep alert and be thankful. Be sure to pray that God will make a way..." (Colossians 4:2-3, CEV).

"You haven't been tempted more than you could expect," wrote Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:13 (Beck). "And you can trust God. He will not let you be tested more than you can stand. But when you are tested, He will also make a way out so that you can bear it."

No sea is deeper than the ocean of His love. There is no army stronger than His hosts, no force greater than His Throne of Grace, and no enemy who can overcome His direct and indirect workings in our lives. What, then, is to be our response in times of difficulty? From Exodus 14, we have been extrapolating ten different principles--the Red Sea Rules--for handling tough situations. So far we've dealt with six of them.

Red Sea Rule #1: When you find yourself in a tough place, recognize that God has either put you here or allowed you to be here for reasons known perhaps only to Himself.

Rule #2: Be more concerned for God's glory than for your own relief.

Rule #3: Acknowledge your enemy, but keep your eyes on Christ.

Rule #4: Pray

Rule #5: Don't be afraid. Stay calm and confident, and give the Lord time to work.

Red Sea Rule #6: When you don't know what to do, just do what comes next. Take the next logical step by faith.

And today we're coming to Red Sea Rule #7: Envision God's Enveloping Presence.

Verse 19 begins by referring to their escort during their trip into the wilderness, the angel of the Lord. And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them....

The Angel of the Presence: His Identity

Who is this Angel of the Presence? I would like for us to do a little Bible study in the books of Exodus and Numbers on the subject of this heavenly escort who guided the Israelites out of Egypt. We begin with Exodus 13:20-22. In this passage, the Israelites have just left Egypt, starting out on their trek toward the Promised Land.

/So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Ethan at the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them...

/So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Ethan at the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them...

Who? The Lord Himself. He went before them, ahead of them, in front of them. How did they know? In what form did this Divine Guide appear?

/And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.

/And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.

It was the Lord Himself who came down and escorted the Israelites out of Egypt. He was the one in the pillar of cloud and fire.

And now, on to chapter 14. Skip ahead to Ex 14:24: Now it came to pass in the morning watch, that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud....

Now turn over to the prophet Isaiah 63:9: In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old.

The word "angel" in these various passages is a translation of a Hebrew word, Mal'ak (pronounced mal-awk') which comes from an unused root word meaning, "to dispatch as a deputy." Mal'ak is usually translated "angel" but sometimes it is rendered "messenger" or "ambassador."

The One inhabiting the pillar of fire and cloud is referred to as the Lord, but He is also the Lord's Ambassador, the Lord's Messenger. He is the One whose job it is to represent God the Father to the Israelites and to you and me. He is the One who is sent by the Father to this world in order shepherd His children.

I want to suggest this morning that the Angel of the Presence is in actuality no one else but the Second Person of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in His pre-incarnate, pre-Bethlehem state, the One whom the Father sent to manifest His presence to His people.

The Angel of the Presence: His Function

Why, then, did God the Son do such a vivid and unusual thing as come down to be with His people in a pillar of cloud and fire? What was His job? What was He doing in Exodus 14. Well, in a word, He came down to give them His Presence, to be their escort.

According to Exodus 13 and 14, that involves two things. First, He was their guide. Look at Exodus 13:21 again: And the Lord (God the Son) went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.

In other words, the Lord Himself was their guide. He went before them to show them the way, and He does the same for His children today. In the last few months, I've discovered an old hymn and the words make a wonderful prayer along these lines:

Teach me Thy way, O Lord, teach me Thy way!
Thy guiding grace afford, teach me Thy way!
Help me to walk aright, more by faith, less by sight;
Lead me with heav'nly light, teach me Thy way!

[\(Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord\)](#)

The Lord was their Guide, but as we read on into Exodus 14, we find that he was also their Guard. Ex 14:19 says: And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them. So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.

What a perfect description of the Lord Jesus Christ. He gives light to those who trust Him, but those who reject Him dwell in utter darkness. He comforts the one and confounds the other. He is a Savior to the one, and a Judge to the other.

For His children, He both guarded and guided them. He preceded them and He protected them. He was simultaneously both their shepherd and their shield. And thus He is to His children today. He goes before us and He goes behind us. This is a recurring theme in the book of Psalms.

Psalm 139:5 says, You have hedged me behind and before, and laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it.

Eugene Peterson translates that verse: I look behind me and you're there, then up ahead and you're there, too--your reassuring presence, coming and going. This is too much, too wonderful--I can't take it all in!

Psalm 125:2 says, As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people from this time forth and forever.

Psalm 5 says that God surrounds His people with favor as with a shield. Psalm 32 says that God surrounds His people with songs of deliverance, and that mercy surrounds those who trust in the Lord.

Psalm 33:22 says, Lord, let your constant love surround us, for our hopes are in you alone (Living Bible).

In Psalm 89:24, the Lord gives this promise to His servants: I will protect and bless him constantly and surround him with my love (Living Bible).

When we find ourselves trapped between the sword and the sea, when we are in painful, difficult, or impossible places in life, what do we do? We must envision the enveloping presence of the Lord. How? Let me make four suggestions about realizing the nearness of God.

The Angel of the Presence: His Nearness

First, affirm His nearness in your heart. The active presence of God in the lives of His children is the convergence of two of His almighty attributes. The first is His omnipresence. As A. W. Tozer points out, the word "present" means near, at hand, here, close to, next to. The prefix "omni" gives it universality. That means God is always everywhere, close to everything, next to everyone.

Hildebert of Lavardin wrote: "God is over all things, under all things, outside all; within but not enclosed; without but not excluded; above but not raised up; below but not depressed; wholly above, presiding; wholly beneath, sustaining; wholly within, filling."

Tozer said, "He is omnipresent. In His infinitude He surrounds the finite creation and contains it. There is no place beyond Him for anything to be." He fills heaven and earth.

The second divine attribute that comes into play here is His love for His children. God is not just omnipresent in a neutral, impersonal sort of way. He is actively present to accompany His children like a friend, to guard them like a sentry, to guide them like a shepherd. The active presence of God in our lives is thus the convergence of His omnipresence with His love, and throughout the Bible we find God's people affirming that reality in their hearts.

In Deuteronomy 7, Moses said, "For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us." Psalm 46 says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Paul told the Philippians, "The Lord is near. (Therefore) do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:5-6, NIV).

The writer of Hebrews said, "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'"

Jeremiah reminded his readers that the Lord is a God near at hand, and not a God afar off (Jeremiah 23:23). Isaiah reminded his audience of God's promise, "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

The writer of Psalm 119:151 said, "You are near, O Lord, and all Your commandments are truth." Psalm 73:28 says: "It is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works."

When Paul was facing the Roman tribunal, charged with capital crimes, he reported, "At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me.... But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me" (2 Timothy 4:16-17).

Second, we must visualize God's presence in our minds. One of my daughters recently told me that sometimes at night as she goes to sleep, she visualizes the Lord holding her in His arms like a father holding his daughter.

The writers of the Bible used such images. Deuteronomy 33:27 says, "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." The Psalmist said, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

Jesus talked about gathering us under his wings like a hen gathers her chicks. David spoke of God as his rock of refuge to which he could continually resort. Isaiah spoke of being borne up on wings like eagles.

Visualizing God's abiding presence near us is not only of great comfort, but it is a restraint to sin. The other day I was visiting with a young man who recently surrendered his life to the Lord Jesus. He told me that he felt he was growing in Christ. He was studying His Bible and praying each day. He was memorizing Scripture. He was sharing his faith with others. But he admitted that he was having one problem--cussing. Every once and a while, a profane word would fly out of his mouth. My response seemed to really surprise him. I said, "Go ahead and cuss for me. Let me hear you cussing right now."

"Oh, no," he said with embarrassment. "I can't do that."

"Sure you can," I replied, "Go ahead and let loose."

"No, I'm not going to do it," he said. "I can't."

I kept pressing him, but I couldn't get one cuss word out of him." So I finally asked him why he was refusing to do what I asked. "Because you're my pastor," he said. "I can't cuss in front of you."

"If you're ashamed to cuss in my presence," I asked, "why is it that you aren't ashamed to cuss in the Lord's presence? He is always at your side."

The young man got my point. If we were to visualize God's presence as it really is, it would be both a comfort to our hearts and a restraint to our behavior.

Brother Lawrence wrote: When we are faithful to keep ourselves in His holy presence and set him always before us, this not only hinders our offending Him and doing anything that may displease Him... but it also begets in us a holy freedom, and, if I may so speak, a familiarity with God, wherewith we ask, and that successfully, the graces we stand in need of.

Third, we must access God's nearness by our prayers. Moses told his people, "What nation has a god as near to them as the Lord our God is near to us, whenever we pray?" The Bible says we should come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in times of need. The best way for developing an awareness of God's presence is to speak to Him often in prayer, as you would speak to a friend.

Dwight Moody was once asked how he managed to remain so intimate in his relationship with Christ. He replied, I have come to Him as the best friend I have ever found, and I can trust Him in that relationship. I have believed He is Savior; I have believed He is God; I have believed His atonement on the cross is mine, and I have come to Him and submitted myself on my knees, surrendered everything to Him, and got up and stood by His side as my friend, and there isn't any problem in my life, there isn't any uncertainty in my work but I turn and speak to Him as naturally as to someone in the same room, and I have done it these years because I can trust Jesus.

Finally, we must reflect His Presence in our demeanor. Missionary John Paton never forgot his father's deeply ingrained habits of daily devotions. Day after day, he would hear his father praying in the next room of the little cottage where he lived, and even as a boy of six, he noticed the bright countenance his father perpetually wore. He later said that while the outside world might not understand the light on his father's face, "we children knew that it was a reflection of the Divine Presence in which his life was lived."

Paton recalled, "Never in temple or cathedral, on mountain or in glen, can I hope to feel that the Lord God is more near, more visibly walking and talking with men, than under that humble cottage roof of thatch and oaken wattles. Though everything else in religion were by some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory, my soul would wander back to those early scenes, and would shut itself up once again in that sanctuary closet, and, hearing still the echoes of those cries to God, would hurl back all doubt with the victorious appeal: He walked with God; why may not I?"

The other week I spoke about Nicholas Herman, who was born in Lorraine, France, in 1605. Little is known of his early life, but he was converted at age 18, he went to work as a footman for a local official in the treasury.

Years passed, and at age fifty Nicholas joined a Carmelite monastery in Paris where he was dubbed Brother Lawrence and assigned to the kitchen, a task that struck him as insulting and humbling. For the next several years, he went about his chores, miserable but dutifully, until gradually recognizing his unhealthy attitude.

He began reminding himself frequently that God's presence continually hovered about him, and his disposition changed. Even the most menial tasks, Lawrence realized, if undertaken for God's glory, are holy; and wherever the Christian stands--even in a hot, thankless kitchen--is holy ground, for the Lord is there, too.

Many more years passed, and Brother Lawrence's countenance and demeanor gradually changed until others began asking him a reason for his radiance. He was sought out and his advice valued. Christian leaders listened to him, and one man was particularly impressed--the Abbot of Beaufort.

The Abbot wrote, It was observed that in the great hurry of business in the kitchen he still preserved his recollection and heavenly-mindedness. He was never hasty nor loitering, but did each thing in its season, with an even, uninterrupted composure and tranquility of spirit.

So in your rush, in your hurrying and worrying, be still and know that He is God. He is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. He will never leave us nor forsake us, and His presence goes both before us and behind us; He hems us in. He envelops us, even as He promised, Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.

Exodus 14:15; Hebrews 11:29 Taking The Next Step

Rob Morgan

And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward." Exodus 14:15

By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land... --Hebrews 11:29

I read the other day that one of the most famous pieces of movie memorabilia in the history of Hollywood has been presented to the American Film Institute recently by Charlton Heston. It was the famous rod that he used to part the waters in the 1956 Cecil B. DeMille classic "The Ten Commandments." The parting of the Red Sea in that film is recognized as one of the earliest and most spectacular special effects in movie history. After the movie, Heston kept the rod, but now he has presented it to the American Film Institute and it is on display at Walt Disney World. According to news reports, Mickey Mouse was on hand to accept the presentation.

Well, the actual story of the parting of the waters in Exodus 14 is no Mickey Mouse affair. It is the greatest miracle in the Old Testament, a defining moment in the history of Israel; and the story of the Israelites trapped at the Red Sea, unable to go either forward or backward, is packed with lessons for you and me as we face the difficult spots that we occasionally encounter in life.

So far in our messages from Exodus 14, we've uncovered five "Red Sea Rules" for handling any adversity that comes to us. For the sake of review, here they are:

Red Sea Rule #1: When you find yourself in a tough place, recognize that God has either put you here or allowed you to be here for reasons known perhaps only to Himself.

Rule #2: Be more concerned for God's glory than for your own relief.

Rule #3: Acknowledge your enemy, but keep your eyes on Christ.

Rule #4: Pray

Rule #5: Don't be afraid. Stay calm and confident, and give the Lord time to work.

Today we're coming to Red Sea Rule #6: When you don't know what to do, just do what comes next. Take the next logical step by faith.

That's what the Israelites did. They couldn't see all the way to Canaan land. They couldn't even see the other side of the Red Sea. But they could take things one step at a time. They could take the next logical step by faith. So the Lord said to Moses, Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.

Few people have faced greater obstacles than the man called the "Father of Modern Missions," William Carey. He pressed into India when everything seemed against him, and when years of work bore little observable fruit. But the secret of his success is found in his resiliency. "There are grave difficulties on every hand," he once wrote, "and more are looming ahead. Therefore we must go

forward."

Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And trusts in God alone,
Laughs at life's impossibilities,
And cries, 'It shall be done.'
Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And trusts in God alone,
Laughs at life's impossibilities,
And cries, 'It shall be done.'

(Father of Jesus Christ, My Lord)

We can seldom see far into the future. We aren't sure what's going to happen a year or two years or five or ten years from now. But the very next step is often more-or-less obvious. So we just take the next logical step by faith.

Sir William Osler

This is the very point at which Dale Carnegie began his famous book, *How To Stop Worrying and Start Living*, published in 1944. He opens chapter one of that book by writing, "In the spring of 1871, a young man picked up a book and read twenty-one words that had a profound effect on his future. A medical student at Montreal General Hospital, he was worried about passing the final examination, worried about what to do, where to go, how to build up a practice, how to make a living.

"The twenty-one words that this young medical student read in 1871 helped him to become the most famous physician of his generation. He organized the world-famous Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. He became Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford--the highest honor that can be bestowed upon any medical man in the British Empire. He was knighted by the King of England. When he died, two huge volumes containing 1466 pages were required to tell the story of his life.

"His name was Sir William Osler. Here are the twenty-one words that he read in the Spring of 1871--twenty-one words from Thomas Carlyle that helped him lead a life free from worry: Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand."

Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." We aren't to worry about yesterday's bread or tomorrow's bread, but today's supply. In the same way, we can awaken each day and pray, "Give us this day our daily plans. Give us this day our daily work. Show us day by day what you want us to do."

That doesn't mean we don't plan for the future, but it does mean, in the words of Thomas Carlyle, that our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.

C. H. Mackintosh

The old Bible commentator, C. H. Mackintosh, has an interesting view on Exodus 14. He believed the Red Sea did not divide throughout all at once, but that it opened progressively as Israel moved forward, so that they needed to trust God for each fresh step. Mackintosh wrote: God never gives guidance for two steps at a time. I must take one step, and then I get light for the next. This keeps the heart in abiding dependence upon God.

Isaiah 43:2 says: When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.

There's a lovely little verse in Genesis 24, spoken by Abraham's servant Eliezer, who was 85 years old at the time. Abraham sent him on a mission to find a bride in Mesopotamia for his son Isaac. When he arrived there, he met Rebekah, and while being entertained by her family, he explained his mission. In Genesis 24:27 in the King James Version, we have this telling phrase: I, being in the way, the Lord led me....

We just do the next logical thing, we take the next logical step, and in the process the Lord leads us.

The Apostle Paul

This is what Paul discovered when he came to a standstill in Acts 16. He had intended to devote his second missionary journey to Asia, but the doors kept closing on him.

/Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had

called us to preach the gospel to them.

When the doors kept closing, Paul just looked around for one that was open and took the next logical step by faith.

John Henry Newman

Many years ago in England there was a young man who struggled to grow closer to the Lord. He was John Henry Newman of Oxford, a young vicar for the Church of England. But he grew confused and couldn't decide whether to stay with the Church of England or become a Roman Catholic. By age 30, he was so troubled that his health deteriorated, and he took a trip to Italy for rest. There he contracted a fever and was confined to bed. Finally able to travel again, he booked passage aboard a sailing ship loaded with fruit. But in the middle of the Mediterranean, the winds died down, not a breeze stirred, and the ship sat still day after day.

Newman was homesick, depressed, weak, and weary. One day going below to his cabin, he met with the Lord and wrote a poem--a prayer--which became one of the most famous hymns in the English language. It says:

Lead, kindly Light! Amid th'encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on;
Keep thou my feet;
I do not ask to see
The distant scene;
One step enough for me.

Lead, kindly Light! Amid th'encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on;
Keep thou my feet;
I do not ask to see
The distant scene;
One step enough for me.

[\(Lead, Kindly Light\)](#)

The Lord leads us one step at a time, and what the Israelites discovered by the Red Sea is this: When you don't know what to do, just do what comes next. Take the next logical step by faith.

Colleen Davis

A couple of years ago, I took a little OMF book on vacation with me entitled *When the Roof Caves In*. It was a series of stories and testimonies by missionaries who had suffered traumatic experiences during the course of their ministries. One of the stories was written by missionary Colleen Davis. She and her husband Koos were serving their third term in Central Thailand with Overseas Missionary Fellowship. Some distance from their home was a dangerous little village named Khao Din.

The missionaries had earlier decided not to go to Khao Din, for the police had no influence there, and the village was controlled by a lawless gang. But a shop owner in Khao Din had become a Christian, and there were reports of many people there eager to hear the Gospel. So Koos and his brother Bill made a trip there by moterbike every week to meet with these young believers.

At two a.m. one Sunday morning, Colleen was awakened by someone at the front door. She opened it to find a national Christian named Mrs. Roy. Behind her in the street was a pickup truck and a handful of men from Khao Din. It was terrible news. Colleen's husband Koos had been shot dead in the village, and they were bringing his body back home.

Colleen's first reaction was to cling to her friend and sob, but almost immediately she remembered that these young tribal Christians were watching her closely. How does a Christian handle bad news? How does a Christian respond when death calls?

Colleen excused herself and sat down for a moment to collect her thoughts. Then she offered the Lord a very simple prayer. She later wrote, "I asked Him to help me to know what to do next and to be calm enough to do it."

I've never been through what Colleen faced, but I've tried to remember her simple prayer when encountering difficult times. We can ask the Lord to help us to know what to do next and to be calm enough to do it.

Saul

There's an interesting parallel in 1 Samuel 10. A man named Kish from the tribe of Benjamin went out to fields and corrals one day, only to discover that his herd of donkeys had gotten loose and wandered off. He called his son, Saul, a tall and handsome teenager, and sent him looking for them. Saul didn't realize it at the time, but the entire trip had been providentially orchestrated by the Lord to lead the young man to the prophet Samuel. When at least the two men met, Samuel anointed Saul king over Israel and said to him something to his effect: Now when you leave here, this is going to happen, and that is going to happen, and then something else is going to happen. In other words, things are going to unfold for you like signs, step-by-step. And then we read verse 7: And let it be, when these signs come to you, that you do as the occasion demands; for God is with you.

- After these signs take place, do whatever you think is best, for God will be with you (New Living Translation).
- Now when these signs meet you, do whatever you see fit to do, for God is with you (New Revised Standard Version).
- After these things happen, do whatever you think is right! God will help you (Contemporary English Version).

That's just another way of stating Red Sea Rule #6: When you don't know what to do, just do what comes next. Take the next logical step by faith. All my life, I've found this rule to be an accurate and true method of guidance, provided I was submissive to Christ, prayerful, and thoughtful. When I was a freshman in college I was unhappy with the school I was attending, and I prayed for guidance. Afterward I felt I should enroll at Columbia Bible College. While at Columbia Bible College, I had no idea what direction to take vocationally, and even after I graduated I didn't know. But an opportunity opened to travel in New England for the summer, preaching and speaking at churches and camps, so I went. One night at a camp somewhere, I believe in Vermont, I slipped out of my bunk and paddled a canoe across the lake, praying for guidance, and it came to me clearly that I should aim in the direction of pastoring. After Katrina and I were married, we were turned down by a dozen different churches, but jobs came open at Sears and J. C. Penney, so I took them. By and by, as we continued to search for the right opportunity, a lovely little church in the country asked us to come and work with them, so we went. After two-and-a-half years, invited us to come here among you.

At every point, when I haven't known what to do, I've tried to just do what comes next and to take the next logical step by faith. I've decided that sometimes plodding is better than plotting when it comes to finding God's will. Waiting on Him and walking in His will is better than rushing in where angels fear to tread. Proverbs 19:2 says, It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way. When we're stuck between a rock and a hard place, we wait for Him to make a way, for He works in ways we cannot see, and then we go forward a step at a time.

It is axiomatic of the Christian life that God generally leads His children step by step and day by day, as we faithfully and prayerfully follow Him. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." The steps--and sometimes the stops.

Nehemiah 9:17 says about the Israelites, "The pillar of cloud led them forward day by day, and the pillar of fire showed them the way through the night (Living Bible).

Psalms 42:8 says, "Yet day by day the Lord also pours out his steadfast love upon me" (Living Bible).

Psalms 110:3 promises, "And your strength shall be renewed day by day like morning dew (Living Bible).

Luke 11:13 says, "Give us day by day our daily bread" (NKJV).

The Psalmist wrote, "Blessed be the Lord day by day, God, our salvation, who carries us (Psalm 68:20, New American Bible).

2 Chronicles 30:21 says, "And the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord" (NKJV)

And 2 Corinthians 4:16 advises, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day (New King James Version).

Day by day and with each passing moment,
Strength I find to meet my trials here;
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,
I've no cause for worry or for fear....
Every day the Lord Himself is near me
With a special mercy for each hour;
All my cares He fain would bear, and cheer me,
He whose name is Counselor and Pow'r.
Help me then in every tribulation
So to trust Thy promises, O Lord,
That I lose not faith's sweet consolation

Offered me within Thy holy Word.
Help me, then, Lord, when toil and trouble meeting,
E'er to take, as from a father's hand,
One by one, the days, the moments fleeting,
Till I reach the promised land.
([Day by Day](#))

Exodus 14:2-4 ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTION

Rob Morgan

You shall camp...by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, "They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in." Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." And they did so. --Exodus 14:2-4

In 1946, author Gertrude Stein felt very tired and ill during a car journey. Rushed to the American hospital at Neuilly, France, she was diagnosed with an advanced state of cancer. The surgeon operated, but it was too late. Gertrude passed away in the evening of July 27th.

Her last words baffled those who gathered around her. "What is the answer?" she asked. When nobody replied, she laughed to herself and said, "Then what is the question?"

Many times we can't find the answers to our dilemmas because we're asking the wrong questions. Perhaps, like Gertrude Stein, we find ourselves diagnosed with an incurable disease. Or we have a child in crisis, or we are facing a terrible legal problem. Maybe the money isn't there for college, or we're in a difficult relationship. Perhaps we've just been jilted by our girlfriend or boyfriend. Our natural instinct is to ask:

How can I solve this problem?
How can I get out of this mess?
How much longer can I endure such pain?
How can I make this go away?
Why did this have to happen to me?

Though natural, those may be the wrong questions to ask. There is a better one--one that results in an entirely new way of looking at difficulties, puts our problems into a different context, and creates a new paradigm for dealing with tough situations.

Do you remember when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem the last time? As He rode his little colt up the Kidron Valley and through the Golden Gate of Jerusalem a spontaneous parade developed. Ecstatic crowds cheered him like a conquering hero, shouting "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" But Jesus didn't share their exuberance, for He knew He was only days from the cross. A dark cloud of anguish gathered around his heart, and He cried in John 12:27: "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name."

In other words, in facing the most impossible and excruciating moment of His life, Jesus didn't ask, "How can I get out of this?" but "How can God be glorified?"

That is the approach we need to have. That is the question we need to ask. "How can God be glorified through these impossible circumstances? What solution to my problem would bring most glory to Him?"

In John 9, the disciples came upon a blind man. He had been blind from birth, and the disciples began asking some interesting questions: "How did this man get into this situation? What fate decreed his blindness? Why did it happen? Who sinned, his man or his parents, that he was born this way?"

Jesus said, "You're asking the wrong question. This man was born blind so that the power of God could be displayed in his life." And for two thousand years, his story has been read by millions of people and preached in thousands of sermons.

Rule #2

That brings us to the second Red Sea Rule for handling tough situations. The first rule says, Recognize that God has either put you here or allowed you to be in this situation. Nothing happens to us by accident, for we travel an appointed way. Rule #2 says: Be

more concerned for God's glory than for your own relief. Let your first concern be glorifying God.

Notice the way it's brought out in Exodus 14: Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.' Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord."

The NIV says, I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh; and all his army.

That is, after all, what our lives are all about. For His glory we were and are created. The first question of the Westminster Longer Catechism asks, "What is the chief and highest end of man?" The answer: "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

I can imagine someone saying, "I have a real problem with that, for it makes God out to be an ego-maniac. It sounds like He is hoarding all honor and glory for Himself at our expense, like a selfish, demented tyrant. Why should He allow me to suffer just so He can be glorified? If He is so concerned about humility in His people, why doesn't He exhibit some Himself?"

But God, being God, has every right and reason to demand and expect glory. Think of it in terms of a wheel. You are I are little nails or tacks in the rim. We have our job to do, and we're very busy trying to hold things together. Sometimes we're stopped dead in our tracks; other times we're going around in circles. But as long as we're doing the job for which we were made and making forward progress, we are fulfilled.

But God isn't a little nail or tack in the rim. He is the hub, the absolute heart and center of the whole operation. As in any wheel, as long as the hub is the center of attention and as long as all the spokes are tightly connected to it with perfect symmetry, the rotations will be smooth. But if we fail to keep the hub in the absolute center of things, our lives grow wobbly, unsteady and unstable.

God and God alone is the heart and center, the source and secret, of the universe, of the world, and of our lives. To Him alone belongs the glory. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory," says Psalm 115, "because of Your mercy, because of Your truth."

The children of Israel didn't understand this, so they cried, "How did we ever get into this mess? The sword is behind us, the sea is before us, and we're doomed!" They should have been asking, "How will God gain glory through this situation?"

The writer of Psalm 106 made this very point: "Our Fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; they did not remember the multitude of Your mercies, but rebelled by the sea--the Red Sea. Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake"

How, then, did God take an impossible situation, flip it around, and use it for His name's sake? There are five ways here in which God was--and is--glorified. First, God gains glory when His enemies are defeated:

When His Enemies Are Defeated

Verse 4 says, I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army.... And in the next chapter, Exodus 15, after their delivery, the Israelites praised the Lord for His victory. Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea."

As Paul said in 1 Corinthians, these things happened as examples for us. Once upon a time we were all enslaved by Satan just as certainly as the Israelites were enslaved by Pharaoh. We "walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Ephesians 2:2-3).

Without Christ, we cannot help but sin. We are slaves to all that is self-destructive.

According to Thomas C. Reeves in his book about John F. Kennedy, A Question of Character, JFK became very promiscuous after the deaths of his brother and sister, Joe and Kathleen. Feeling that he hadn't long to live himself, he "accelerated his pursuit of pleasure. Especially after Eunice moved out of the Georgetown house in 1948, girls went in and out of Jack's bed in such numbers that he often neglected to learn their first names, referring to them the next morning merely as "sweetie" or "kiddo."

But there was one woman who resisted his advances, and Kennedy seemed to respect her for that and he confided in her. She later wrote, 'During one of these conversations I once asked him why he was doing it--why he was acting like his father, why he was avoiding real relationships, why he was taking a chance on getting caught in a scandal at the same time he was trying to make his career take off. He took a while trying to formulate an answer. Finally he shrugged and said, "I don't know, really. I guess I can't help

it.””

He spoke those words with a "sad expression on his face. He looked like a little boy about to cry."

Why do people sin? Why are we so easily addicted to pornography, alcohol, drugs, and gambling? Why do we so easily follow the wrong crowd down the wrong road. Why do you become slaves to our anger or our ego? We can't help it. Satan and sin are the ultimate slave drivers. They present a wonderful facade--fun, pleasure, fame, fortune, indulgence. But the facades become fetters, and the party always ends in pain.

But Christ comes into our lives and sets us free. As Wesley vividly put it:

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

(And Can It Be That I Should Gain-)

Satan, however, doesn't give up without a fight. He comes racing after the newly converted soul, chariot wheels kicking up storms of dust, seeking to discourage and defeat you.

"The great tyrant has not forgotten you," Spurgeon once thundered to his congregation in London, "and he designs your capture and re-enslavement." He may use your old friends, a spot of persecution, or discouraging responses by your family. He may show you a hypocrite in the church, or just afflict you with a general slacking of zeal. He may launch a missile of temptation right at your heart or mind, or perhaps he'll send a special trial or tribulation.

He tries to box us in, to trap us in difficulty, to entangle us in trouble, to corner us in impossible situations. Perhaps you're in a tough situation right now, suffering pain, worry, anguish, or illness. The devil is behind it, that old tyrant. His flaming darts are aimed at you.

When in the name of Jesus Christ we rebuff the enemy, when we resist the devil and make him flee, when we claim the victory, stand our ground, and resist his wiles, he falls like lightning from heaven. He is drowned in the Red Sea of the blood of Jesus Christ.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free," Paul wrote to the Galatians, "and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."

Or as it's put in 2 Corinthians 9:13: "Glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ" (RSV).

God is gloried when sin and Satan are defeated in our lives.

When His Children Are Delivered

God is also glorified when His children are delivered from hopeless perils. In the Red Sea account, the Lord fully intended from the beginning to gain glory for Himself by proving His ability to supernaturally snatch His people from the jaws of annihilation. He never worried for a moment about the outcome, for He well knew He could provide an escape route for His people. "God is faithful," says the Bible, "...who will also make the way of escape."

Now, admittedly, the Lord doesn't always deliver us from our problems in the way we want Him to. He does it His way, but in the long run His way is always best.

I remember reading about the great evangelist known as "Gipsy" Smith. His real name was Rodney, and when he was just a gypsy boy in England, his family often lived on the brink of starvation. But his father, a Christian, always trusted the Lord to provide for them, and the Lord always did. One Christmas was particularly difficult. Rodney's father fell on his knees and began to pray, thanking God for His goodness and promises. Rising to his knees, the man looked at his children and said, "I don't know quite what we shall have for Christmas, but we will sing," He picked up his fiddle and began to sing these words:

In some way or other
The Lord will provide.
It might not be my way.
It might not be thy way.
And yet in His own way,
The Lord will provide.
/In some way or other

The Lord will provide.
It might not be my way.
It might not be thy way.
And yet in His own way,
The Lord will provide.
(The Lord Will Provide)

While they were still singing, there was a knock at the door, and the needed provisions came.

I can tell you with the same confidence that God--for His own name's sake--will deliver His people from every trial and trouble they will ever encounter. In some way or other, the Lord will deliver. It might not be my way. It might not be thy way. And yet in His own way, the Lord will deliver. He will do it for His own name's sake; He will do it for His own glory.

Psalm 50:15 says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."

When His Name Is Exalted

The Lord also gains glory when His name is exalted, for when He provides deliverance, others see it and fear Him.

Forty years after the parting of the Red Sea, Joshua and the Israelites at last approached the Promised Land. A team of Israeli agents were sent to spy out the land, and two of them came to Jericho. There they were hidden by a prostitute named Rahab. Though she was a sinful and immoral woman, she had a sensitive heart and she was searching for God. Taking the two spies onto her rooftop she hid them under stalks of flax and later helped them escape over the city wall.

This is what she told them: "I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt.... Our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and on earth beneath."

In the early 1800s there was a Freewill Baptist preacher in New England named Charles Bowles. He was a powerful young man in the pulpit, but in some areas he was disdained because he was black. His mother was the daughter of a Revolutionary War hero, and his father was from Africa. Once in Huntington, Vermont, he learned a mob had formed. They were secretly plotting to interrupt his sermon, tie him to a wooden horse, and throw him into the nearby lake to sink or swim as he would.

He was in a tough spot. If he cancelled his engagement, he would lose the opportunity to evangelize, not to mention his self-respect. But if he persisted in preaching, there would be violence. Going down to a grove of trees, he knelt and prayed earnestly, asking God for wisdom and deliverance. Then he went to the church and began preaching.

When the mob entered, he began quoting from Matthew 23: You brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? He preached with such power that the mob was arrested. No one dared move. Finishing his sermon, Bowles announced, "I am informed that there are persons here who have agreed to put me on a wooden horse, carry me to the pond, and throw me in; and now, dear creatures, I make no resistance."

But he had a request--that they sing on the way to the lake. As he started down the aisle and out the building, it produced an electric effect on the audience. They began singing and following him. Some fell prostrate on the floor, as though struck by lightning. There was a powerful sense of the presence of God.

And shortly after, the troublemakers did meet Bowles at the lake. But instead of throwing him in, it was the preacher who plunged them into the chilly waters, baptizing them as followers of Jesus Christ.

When we find ourselves in tough situations, we must ask ourselves, "How does God intend to gain glory in this?" For He surely intends to exalt His name in every situation His children face.

When His Exploits Are Remembered

Fourth, the Lord is glorified when His exploits are remembered. There is a remarkable parallel to Exodus 14 found in Joshua 3. These two chapters are the exit and entrance chapters for the children of Israel. In Exodus 14 they escape Egypt into the wilderness. Forty years later, they enter the Promised Land in Joshua 3.

How did they exit Egypt? Through parted waters. How did they enter Canaan? Through parted waters.

Many people don't realize that the Lord repeated the Red Sea miracle at the end of the wilderness wanderings, on a smaller scale but for a very distinct purpose. Look at the way Joshua puts it:

And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you...." And it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho. Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan.

I grew up beside the Doe River in Carter County, Tennessee. It is almost exactly the width and depth of the Jordan. I fished in it, swam in it, and often walked its banks. It was possible for me, in the dry season, to wade across the river in some of its broader spots. Other places came up to my hips, and in its narrower confines, the water was over my head. But occasionally the Doe River flooded, and it was a sight to see, over spilling its banks, driving residents to higher ground, raging past our house, the water carrying debris and timber like corks.

The Lord could have brought the Children of Israel to the Jordan during dry season. He could have ordered them across at hip level, or taken them to a broad, shallow area where they might have sloshed across. But in His providence and timing, He brought them there at flood stage.

God doesn't always arrange the easiest ways for us, for if everything came easily we'd never learn to trust Him.

As it was, the priests leading the multitudes stepped forward by faith, as ordered, into the raging water. As they did so, the flow suddenly ceased, and the waters begin gathering in a heap upstream, as though held back by an invisible dam. The riverbed below the dam became dry, and the children of Israel, who had stepped out of Egypt through parted waters, dryshod, forty years before, now stepped out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land in the same way.

Now the question: Why did God repeat the miracle? The answer is given in Joshua 4. Twelve men were commanded to dig out of the river twelve large stones and to erect a monument. Verses 19-24 say:

Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal. Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land'; for the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.

God intends for His exploits to be remembered. The reason He dried up the Jordan was to remind the Israelites of His prior miracle. And the reason He ordered a monument built was to remind future generations of what He had done at both the Red Sea and the Jordan.

That's why we need to tell our children of those things that God has done in our lives. That's why we need to share our testimony with others. That's why we sometimes keep journals, or write our experiences out for future generations.

That's also why I love Christian biography so much, especially missionary biography. I've just finished the autobiography of missionary Isobel Kuhn, and it's made me praise God for the things He did in her life and through her. Mrs. Kuhn grew up going to parties and dancing the nights away. She was a very worldly young lady, given to parties and society. But as her mother prayed for her the Lord began dealing with her. It took a broken engagement and a period of heartbreak, but gradually Isobel became a powerful woman for God.

Together she and her husband John faced with incredible resilience suffering, serious illness, war, danger, and death--but they left in their wake a growing, thriving church among the Lisu peoples of China. She died at age 53, but she left behind several books chronicling God's exploits among the Lisu and in her own life, and I've been blessed as a result.

Psalms 136, written hundreds of years after the Exodus, says, O give thanks... to Him who divided the Red Sea in two, for His mercy endures forever. He intends for His exploits to be remembered, and as a result He wants you to find ways of sharing with others how His grace has been sufficient in your life.

When His Praises Are Sounded

Finally, God gains glory when His praises are sounded. When we pass from Exodus 14 to Exodus 15, we notice the first thing the Israelites did, having arrived safely through the waters onto the western shore of the Red Sea, was to break out into song, praising God for His deliverance.

Exodus 15 says, Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"

The greater the problem, the stronger God's help. And the stronger His help, the greater our praise should be.

The old commentator C. M. Mackintosh wrote a hundred years ago, "It is when the people of God are brought into the greatest straits and difficulties, that they are favored with the finest displays of God's character and actings; and for this reason, He oftentimes leads them into a trying position, in order that He may more markedly show Himself."

Then Mackintosh said: "We too frequently lose sight of this great truth, and the consequence is that our hearts give way in the time of trial. If we could only look upon a difficult crisis as an occasion of bringing out, on our behalf, the sufficiency of divine grace, it would enable us to preserve the balance of our souls, and to glorify God, even in the deepest waters."

What crises are you facing right now? What difficulty? What hurt?

Try this. Instead of asking the usual bevy of questions that crowds into our hearts, stop yourself and consciously ask this one instead: "How can God be glorified in my life through this situation?"

You may not know the answer at that particular moment, but you can be certain there is one. And you can trust Him to reveal it in His own way and in His own time, and for His own glory, for as Jesus taught us to say:

Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory--forever. Amen!

Exodus 14 Under The Cloud

1 Corinthians 10:1; 1 Corinthians 10:6; Psalm 77; Exodus 14

Rob Morgan

Our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea.... Now these things happened as examples for us.... —1 Corinthians 10:1, 6 (NASV)

The Lord has never spoken audibly to me, but He almost has—twice. Once when I was a teenager, seeking guidance regarding my schooling. The other occasion occurred years later while flying from Athens to New York. I didn't want to go home. Ahead of me lay an impossible situation, and I was a bundle of nerves. A certain, sensitive area of my life had unraveled, and I inwardly throbbled. Gazing down on the choppy Atlantic, I asked God for His help then opened my Bible. The day's reading, at it happened, concerned another sea—the story of the parting of the waters in Exodus 14. The seat beside me was vacant, but as I read the biblical account, I suddenly felt as though the Lord Himself had taken that seat and was personally tutoring me through the chapter. My fingers reached for a pen, and I started scribbling as fast as I could write.

Ten propositions emerged—ten ways of handling impossible situations, a divine protocol for coping when we find ourselves caught "between the devil and the deep Red Sea." Like any wide-eyed Bible student, I thought I was the first to discover the real power of the Red Sea story, but I later learned I wasn't.

There was a forlorn man in ancient Jerusalem who beat me to the punch...

The Middle Eastern sun had fallen hours ago, and the cold envelope of night had closed around Jerusalem. The streets of the old, stone city were emptying as stragglers stumbled home. All over town, oil lamps yielded the last of their flickering lights and pungent odors, and embers lay dying in the hearths. Under cover of darkness couples embraced, children slept, dogs barked, and young Israeli soldiers joked quietly on the ramparts, unalarmed and unafraid.

The world was at peace. But in a tiny room near the temple, Asaph was awake, shivering and scared, sitting blanket-enfolded on the edge of his small bed. His world was in ruins, and, though exhausted, he couldn't sleep. He would have preferred physical torture to such psychological pain. He battled to believe, fought to remain calm, to quell the rising fear, but it was a lost cause. Worries swelled and broke over him like restless, relentless breakers. He paced and prayed, but God seemed further than the distant moon. He knelt, but his knees hurt. He tried to lay down, but panic pushed him from bed. His imagination saw nothing in the darkness but trouble and terror.

He wanted to cry, but couldn't. Wanted to scream, but wouldn't. Finally he sat at his small table, lit his lamp, picked up his quill, and began pouring his soul onto paper.

Three thousand years have since passed, but we can re-live this episode and learn from it as needed—just by peering over Asaph's shoulder and reading his anguished, angry words, for what he wrote long ago found its way into our Bibles under the heading of Psalm 77.

This 20-verse hymn falls naturally into two parts, with the division occurring between verses 10 and 11. In the first stanza, verses 1-10, Asaph ventilates his feelings and asks six furious questions of God. But in the last half of the psalm, verses 11-20, he works his way from fear back to faith, and, surprisingly, he ends up, like I did, at the banks of the Red Sea. The first half of Psalm 77, then, we might call "Night," and the last half, "Light."

Night

Asaph's first words are: I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted.

Peterson, in his paraphrase of Psalm 77, puts verse two like this: I found myself in trouble and went looking for my Lord; my life was an open wound that wouldn't heal. When friends said, "Everything will turn out all right," I didn't believe a word they said....

He made an effort to pray, but his prayer seemed to die on his lips. I remembered you, O God, and I groaned; I mused, and my spirit grew faint. You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak.

The Living Bible puts it, You don't let me sleep. I am too distressed even to pray.

I hate those nights when I'm too tired to pray and too worried to sleep. For me, they often come when I've made the mistake of trying to pay the bills at bedtime, or when a loved one is ill or hospitalized, or when a child is out with the car past curfew. Especially then.

The devil often chooses to attack under cloak of darkness. It's no accident that Satan filled Judas' heart at suppertime, and that our Lord was subsequently arrested at the midnight hour when both He and His disciples were exhausted. Daniel was thrown into the lion's during the night watches. The disciple's never seemed to sail into storms during the daytime, but only at night when their terror was magnified by darkness. Paul and Silas were whipped just as the sun was setting, then encased in the stocks of a blackened prison to suffer through the night. It was during the evening that a terrified Jacob confronted the divine wrestler, and that David huddled with his men, pursued by his rebellious son Absalom.

During the daylight hours we tend to be a little more rested and busy. Our routines take over, giving us focus and stability. Friends come alongside to cheer us, and the sunshine lifts our spirits. But at night when the rest of the world sleeps, when exhaustion sets in, when darkness pervades, when shadows fall.... At night the devil prowls and growls and pounces on his prey.

"You can have some mighty strange experiences at midnight," Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., once said, following a middle-of-the-night phone call threatening the lives of his wife and daughter.

And so it was that Asaph's emotions reeled and rolled through the night like a sinking ship on a stormy sea, causing him at length to spit out a series of six angry questions. We find them in verses 7-9, and they are addressed to God. Their intensity is felt not only by their sharp words but by their rapid-fire, staccato-like delivery:

- Will the Lord reject forever?
- Will he never show his favor again?
- Has his unfailing love vanished forever?
- Has his promise failed for all time?
- Has God forgotten to be merciful?
- Has he in anger withheld his compassion?

Ever felt like asking those same questions? Ever said such things yourself? These questions are not coming from an atheist, agnostic, or bitter cynic, but from a godly man whose life has thus far been wholly given over to the Lord's work. Asaph was Israel's chief worship leader, a musician, a hymnist who had spent years studying God's Word, practicing its principles, and teaching them to others through song.

But now he was reduced by sorrow to wondering if God's love had worn itself threadbare, if His grace had evaporated, if His promises had expired. As Peterson translates it: "Just my luck," I said. "The High God goes out of business just the moment I need him."

One of my favorite preachers was the North Carolina evangelist Vance Havner. Once as a college student, I spent the afternoon with him and was impressed with his childlike humility, his keen grasp of Scripture, and his deep love and dependence on his beloved wife Sarah.

Later after her death Havner was inconsolable. In one of his last books, he described his feelings like this: I think of a year that started out so pleasantly for my beloved and me. We had made plans for delightful months ahead together. Instead, I sat by her bedside and watched her die of an unusual disease. She expected to be healed but she died. Now, all hopes of a happy old age together are dashed to the ground. I plod alone with the other half of my life on the other side of death. My hand reaches for another hand now vanished and I listen at night for the sound of a voice that is still. And I am tempted a thousand times to ask, "My God, why...?"

It is a question well-known to the heroes of Scripture.

- Rebekah asked in Genesis 25:22: If all is well, why am I like this? So she went to inquire of the Lord.
- Moses asked in Exodus 5:22: Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me?
- In Numbers 11:20, the Israelites asked: Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?
- Gideon wanted to know, Why then has all this happened to us? (Judges 6:13).
- Naomi groaned, I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty. Why...? (Ruth 1:21).
- Nehemiah asked, Why is the house of God forsaken? (Nehemiah 13:11).
- Job said, Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb? (Job 3:11).
- Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? Why do You hide in times of trouble? asked David in Psalm 10:1.
- Isaiah prayed, O Lord, why have You made us stray from Your ways? (Isaiah 63:17).
- Jeremiah wanted to know, Why is my pain perpetual and my wound incurable? (Jeremiah 15:18).
- Habakkuk asked, Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble? (Habakkuk 1:3).
- Even our Lord cried, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? in Matthew 27:46.

The human soul cannot long live with this much pain, nor does God intend for us to. He wants us to move from night to light, and that is exactly what slowly happened to Asaph in Psalm 77.

Light

In verse 11, Asaph begins to reason his way, logically and by faith, out of anguish. He wrote: Then I thought, "To this I will appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High." I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

There is only one way of coping with unbearable pain—you must learn to focus your thoughts on something unmovable and sure. I have a friend who endured torture-training in an elite, top-secret military unit. He was deprived of sleep, twisted into painful position, and submerged into vats of ice water. His instructors told that he could survive only by forcing his mind away from the pain and onto something fixed, solid, and sure. He could endure only by the intense focus of his mental energy on something genuinely enduring.

Christians can cope with torturous levels of emotional pain by only focusing on one of three things:

- God's Power in the Past
- His Presence in the Now
- His Promises for the Future

In Psalm 77, Asaph emphasized the first of those. I will remember your great deeds, Lord; I will recall the wonders you did in the past. I will think about all that you have done; I will meditate on all your mighty acts.

Here, then, is a seminal lesson from God's Word: Remembering God's past faithfulness provides powerful reassurance in present crises. If God has been our help in ages past, He'll be our hope for years to come. If He has begun a good work in us, He'll carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. He hasn't led us this far just to let us drown in bottomless seas of sorrow. The Lord will make a way, for He has a history of doing just that.

Last year, I received a terrible blow that left me wandering around in a sort of spiritual daze which eventually gave way to depression. A friend of mine, seeing my funk, asked to see me. "In all your life," he asked, "has the Lord ever failed you? Has he ever abandoned or forsaken you?"

I was brought up short, for the only possible answer was: "No, He hasn't."

"Then why do you think he has forsaken you now?"

When the present is dark, switch on the flashlight of past blessings. God's faithfulness in past crises is a token of His availability in current adversities. As the hymn says: Praise Him for His grace and favor To our fathers in distress; Praise Him, still the same as ever, slow to chide and swift to bless. Alleluia! Alleluia! Glorious is His faithfulness.

What example of God's faithfulness most enlivened Asaph during his "dark night of the soul?"

The splitting of the sea in Exodus 14. His mind went back to that dramatic moment when, with powerful gusts from heaven, God delivered His people from a hopeless predicament.

Continuing in verse 14, Asaph wrote: You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. With a mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you and writhed; the very depths were convulsed.

He then described the wind and thunder and storm that swept over the Red Sea in full view of the huddled masses of trapped and terrified Israelites. Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked.

And then Asaph said simply: Your path led through the sea.

The Lord often leads us around the waters, and sometimes he walks on the water. But occasionally he takes us through the water. Isaiah once wrote: When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.... This is what the Lord says—he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters.

Asaph's mind then found relief from its present distress by remembering God's power displayed to those in similar straits who discovered in spectacular fashion, that God can make a way even through the sea.

Psalm 77 ends: Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

The point of it all is this: God put the Israelites in an impossible situation just to show them there are no impossible situations where He is concerned. And he recorded the story in Exodus 14 for our benefit. He wants us to know that His people are never trapped. When we seem caught betwixt sword and sea, He will make a way.

The God of Israel designed one of the most spectacular miracles in the Bible just to teach us that lesson. It's a divine model, giving us a biblical protocol—ten propositions—for dealing with acute anxiety.

Just think of it: The winds blew, the sea split, the waters congealed into towering walls, and the Israelites passed through dry shod, not for the entertainment value of the experience, but to prove to us in earth-shaking, history-making fashion, that, even when we are most anxious and distressed, that...

God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way,
He works in ways
We cannot see.
He will make a way for me.
He will be my Guide,
Hold me closely to His side,
With love and strength
For each new day.
He will make a way.
He will make a way.

Exodus 14:21-22 God's Specialty

Rob Morgan

Several years ago I was on a long flight, traveling home from overseas, and worried about a particular problem in my life. It was a difficult issue, and I was an absolute bundle of nerves. I pulled out my Bible and started reading where I had left off the day before. As it happened, the passage I was coming to was Exodus 14, the story of the Children of Israel trapped by the Red Sea. The seat beside me was vacant, but as I began reading, I felt as though the Lord Himself came and sat beside me and was personally tutoring me through the passage. It was like the passage opened up to me in an unusual and rapid way. My fingers reached for a pen, and I started scribbling.

As I worked through the chapter, ten rules unfolded like rubber life rafts inflating before me, ten ways of handling dilemmas and discouragements, a divine protocol for handling life when we find ourselves caught between the devil and the deep Red Sea.

This chapter has been very special to me ever since, and so I felt the time had come to share this material. Earlier this Spring I began a sermon series based on these ten "Red Sea Rules," as I'm calling them. I had intended to finish the series before Easter, but we had some delays. As a result, I had to interrupt these messages from Exodus 14 for a three-week Easter series entitled What Happens When We Die?

Now, today, and for the next two weeks, I'd like to return to the theme: God will make a way when there seems to be no way. He works in ways we cannot see. He'll make a way for you and me.

The Red Sea may roll before us, the desert may trap us, the enemy may press on our heels. As an old hymn says, "Friends may fail us, foes assail us." We may be "tempted, tried, and sometimes failing." The past may seem implausible and the future impossible, but God works in ways we cannot see. He will make a way of escape for His weary, but waiting, children. The One-Who-Can-Do-Impossible-Things will work all things together for good in the lives of those who love Him. The reality of the Red Sea, in a word, is this: God will always make a way for His tired but trusting children, even if He must split the seas to do it.

Today I'd like to briefly review Red Sea Rules #1-7, then we'll press on with Red Sea Rule #8.

Red Sea Rule #1, based on the first two verses of Exodus 14, says: When you find yourself in an impossible situation, recognize that God has either placed you there or allowed you to be there for reasons perhaps known at the time only to Himself.

Red Sea Rule #2, as the chapter unfolds, says: Be more concerned for God's glory than for your own relief. In other words, our entire perspective changes when we begin asking the right questions in times of trouble. Instead of saying, "How can I get out of this mess?" ask, "How can God gain glory through this situation?"

Red Sea Rule #3, harkening to Pharaoh and his army, says, Acknowledge your enemy, but keep your eyes on the Lord.

Red Sea Rule #4 says, Pray. Exodus 14:10 says, "And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord."

Red Sea Rules #5 comes straight from verses 11 through 14, and it says: Don't be afraid. Stay calm and confident and give the Lord time to work.

Then, from Exodus 14:15, we deduced this principle as Red Sea Rule #6: When you don't know what to do, just do what comes next. Take the next logical step by faith.

Along the way, remember that God surrounds His people like a pillar of fire and cloud, leading us to Red Sea Rule #7: Envision God's Enveloping Presence.

Now, today, as we resume this sermon series, we're coming to Exodus 14:21-22, and to Red Sea Rule #8, which says: Trust God to save and deliver in His own unique way. That's His specialty.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left (Exodus 14:21-22).

It was a night of fury and foaming waters. The Children of Israel, bewildered and wide-eyed with fear, huddled in their masses, trembling, waiting in unbearable suspense. The Divine Presence moved between the Israelites and the Egyptians, casting the latter into darkness, while for the Israelites the night lit up as the daytime. Moses the man of God, taking his place on a rise beside the coastline, raised both arms over the breakers of the Sea, gripping his famous rod, lifting it high, and the wind began blowing from the East. The children of Israel was facing East, traveling East-to-West, so the wind must have cut down from above them, hit the waters before them, and ploughed a wedge through the waves like a massive, invisible funnel. Walls of water rose up like crystal

enclosures, and the relentless, blasting wind dried out the ocean floor until it was hard as concrete.

And, according to Hebrews 11:29, by faith the Israelites passed through the Red Sea as by dry land. It became an avenue for them, but an ambush for their enemies. What was to Israel a gateway was but a graveyard to the Egyptians.

From these verses, Exodus 14:21-22, we are taught to trust God to save and deliver in His own unique way. That's His specialty.

Deuteronomy 23:14 says: The Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you... therefore your camp shall be holy.

As the shepherd boy David faced Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:37, he said, "The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

Job said, "He shall deliver you in six troubles, Yes, in seven no evil shall touch you" (Job 5:19).

Psalms 50:15 promises, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Galatians 1:4 tells us that Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father."

When he was facing his final trial before the Emperor of Rome, Paul wrote, "And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!" (2 Timothy 4:18).

2 Peter 2:9 reminds us that the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations.

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous," says Psalm 34:17, "but the Lord delivers him out of them all."

Does that include financial problems? Does that include marital and relational situations? Does it include illnesses such as cancer and heart disease? Does that mean that God will deliver us from emotional problems such as depression or runaway anger? Will He deliver us from harm and danger?

Yes, but we need to have God's perspective on deliverance as we see it in the Bible. God views things from the vantage point of eternity, and He doesn't always see things as we do. Or, to put it more accurately, we don't always see things as He does. In Isaiah 55, the Lord cautions us, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

That means we must view God's deliverance biblically. Not emotionally. Not by common sense or human standards. But biblically.

And what does the Bible say? The Bible promises that God will deliver His children from every evil work, from every peril and problem, from every trial and tribulation, from the very evil one himself. But He doesn't always deliver in the same way. There are no cookie cutters in heaven. God doesn't have standard, same-size-fits-all solutions to apply to our various problems. Every situation is treated by Him as singular and special; and He designs unique, tailor-made deliverances to our every trial and tribulation.

God Moves in Miraculous Ways

Sometimes He works in ways that are miraculous, such as we see here in Exodus 14. I believe God can still do miracles today whenever He chooses. I've talked to many people over the years who can testify that God performed a miracle in their lives or in their families, and from time to time I hear and read of truly miraculous reports, particularly on the mission field.

Recently in Decision Magazine, published by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, I read about a denominational executive in Honduras named Tito Rodriques, who was traveling to a church in the mountains above La Ceiba. He was driving across rough mountain roads, and the weather was horrible. The region had endured a three-day storm because of a hurricane. Tito made the trip anyway, and when he arrived in the village everyone was surprised to see him.

"How did you get here?" they all asked.

"I came on the road from La Ceiba," he replied.

"That's impossible!" said the villagers. "The bridge washed out last night."

Tito told them the bridge must have already been repaired. He could tell, he said, because the wood was still white and unweathered.

"No, Tito. The bridge is gone." A handful of villagers accompanied Tito to the chasm where, to his utter amazement, Tito saw no bridge. Yet he had crossed the chasm safely, driving across a bridge made of brand-new wood.

The God who made a path through the Red Sea can build a bridge in the high mountains if He so chooses. With God, nothing is impossible; nothing is too hard. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, and His ear is not dull that it cannot hear. He alone can storm the impregnable, devise the improbable, and perform the impossible.

Missionary hero Amy Carmichael once said, "When you are facing the impossible, you can count on the God of the impossible."

"We have a God who begins with the impossible and goes on from there," said Cameron V. Thompson.

When the children of Israel were trapped and afraid
betwixt the rolling tides and Pharaoh's tirade,
Jehovah commanded and Moses obeyed.

As pitiful prayers filled an impossible place,
as Moses looked up to Jehovah's dread face,
as the people of God needed infinite grace,
the mighty winds howled; violent waves dashed.
The waters quivered and the lightening flashed
The thunder boomed and the breakers crashed.

When the sun rose up on that terrible day
the children saw through the mist and the spray
that the God of all grace had made them a way.

And many a Christian in the years that have passed
Though troubled by fears, though tired and harassed,
Have found the same God strong, sure, and steadfast.
God Moves in Providential Ways

But when you study the subject of miracles in the Bible, you realize that they do not seem to be God's standard operating procedure on this earth. Sometimes we get the idea that the Bible is packed with miracles from Genesis to Revelation. That isn't true. There seems instead to have been certain periods in biblical history when, in God's sovereign wisdom, He allowed there to be a clustering of miracles.

For example, apart from the creation week, we see very few miracles in the Scripture until we come to the last third of the life of Moses. Then there are few miracles until the days of Elijah and Elisha. Most of the great Old Testament prophets were not known as miracle workers--just Elijah and Elisha. Later, there were a few miracles associated with the life and ministry of Daniel. Afterward, we see very few miracles until the time of Christ and the apostles. And that's it. There are few miracles recorded in the latter era of the New Testament writings.

One Bible scholar put it this way: Miracles in the Bible are clustered during four periods.... During the first cluster of miracles, God used Moses and Joshua to establish Israel as a nation. During the second cluster, Elijah and Elisha gave warning to the northern Kingdom, Israel, a nation on its way to oblivion. During the third cluster, God showed that even in captivity He is faithful to His people as He was to Daniel and his friends. During the final cluster, the Church was established as Jesus and the apostles performed signs and wonders.

In other words, throughout most of the Bible God helped and delivered His people in ways that were ordinary and providential rather than overtly supernatural and miraculous. I'd like to reach back into Christian history and share with you one of my favorite stories that perfectly illustrates this.

William and Marion Veitch, a godly Presbyterian couple, lived with their children in a peaceful home in Scotland in the 17th century. William was a preacher, but in those days the Presbyterians were outlawed, and he lived in fear that sooner or later he would be arrested. It happened one night in 1680. Royal Scottish soldiers burst in and dragged William off to prison.

It was all orchestrated by an evil man named Thomas Bell, a vicar in the established church who drank and used profanity and harbored a burning hatred for William and Marion Veitch.

William was taken to Morpeth Prison. Marion was profoundly troubled, but she drew strength from certain verses in the Bible, such as "He does all things well," and "Trust in the Lord, and fear not what man can do."

As soon as she could arrange it, she set off to visit her husband, for it appeared he would be removed to Edinburgh and executed.

Marion's journey took place on a bitterly cold January day. The snow was blinding, and she had to fight the weather on horseback. Night fell, and she trudged on, finally arriving at the prison half-frozen about midnight.

The guards wouldn't let her see William until morning, so Marion sat by the fire and waited. When morning broke, she was allowed to see her husband for only a moment, and only in the presence of guards. Then she was torn away, expecting to never see him again.

Marion went to a friend's house, wept her fill, and opened her Bible. The words of Isaiah 8:12-13 spoke powerfully to her: "... Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow. Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread." She rested herself in the Lord and cast her burden on him.

Meanwhile their archenemy, Vicar Thomas Bell, the one who was responsible for William's arrest, gloated to friends, "Now Veitch will be hanged tomorrow as he deserves."

That evening Thomas Bell called on a friend and the two lingered over the alcohol until about 10 p.m. when he said he must be going. The night was dark and cold, the river was icy and swollen, and his host urged him to wait till morning. But Bell had work to do and victims to prosecute. He rode away warmed by alcohol, but he never reached home. Two days later his dead body was found standing up to his arms in one solid block of ice in the river.

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The history of the church and the history of our lives are liberally sprinkled with incidents like that--God's over-ruling, under-girding providence, God's protection, God's provision, God's answers to prayer.

In the unfolding of His providence, burdens become blessings, tears lead to triumph, and the redemptive grace of God overcomes the undercurrents of life in the experiences of His children. For them...

Ill that God blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill,
And all is right that seems most wrong
If it be His sweet will.

This is Romans 8:28, lived out in daily experience: All things work together for good to those who love the Lord and are called according to His purposes. Understanding the Sovereignty of God over life is one of the most liberating experiences a Christian can ever make.

John Calvin once said, When the light of divine providence has once shone upon a godly man, he is then relieved and set free not only from the extreme anxiety and fear that were pressing him before, but from every care.... Ignorance of providence is the ultimate misery; the highest blessedness lies in knowing it.... (It gives) incredible freedom from worry about the future.

No wonder Charles Spurgeon once quipped, We believe in the providence of God, but we do not believe half enough in it.

God Moves in Mysterious Ways

But finally, God also moves in a mysterious way. Sometimes we don't see His miracles and we can't discern His providence. Sometimes He seems to tarry, to delay, even to forget. Sometimes He doesn't deliver overtly or covertly. One of the most remarkable passages in the Bible is found late in chapter 11 of Hebrews, the "Faith Chapter" of the Bible.

The writer is describing the great heroes of the faith, and, running out of time, he says:

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But notice the dramatic change in the middle of verse 35:

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented--of whom the world was not worthy...

But we can say that if the Lord does not deliver overtly (with a miracle) or covertly (with His obvious providential overruling), He will deliver expertly, with a deeper level of providence that we can discern, and in the end it will be better for us.

This is surely what the Apostle Paul had in mind in the 2 Timothy 4 passage, when just before his execution, he wrote these words:

And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!"

How did God deliver him? Almost certainly he was beheaded within days of writing this, his body cast who knows where and his head tossed in the grave after him. But Paul understood something about being absent from the body and being present with the Lord. Paul understood something about going to be with Christ, which is far better. Paul understood something about the resurrection. And He knew that God would either deliver him through a miracle, through providence, or through His more mysterious ways.

It was William Cowper (pronounced Cooper) who wrote the grand old hymn, *God Moves in a Mysterious Way*. He was the English poet, a friend of John Newton, who struggled all his life with melancholy. According to Ernest Emurian in *Living Stories of Famous Hymns*, William Cowper wrote this hymn following a period of almost suicidal depression. Calling for a carriage, he ordered the driver to take him to the Ouse River, three miles away, where he planned to kill himself. The driver, knowing the state of mind of his passenger, breathed a prayer of thanks when a thick fog enveloped the area. He purposely lost his way in the dense fog, jogging up one road and down another as Cowper fell into a deep sleep. Several hours passed, the driver going in circles, letting his passenger rest. Finally he returned him to his home.

"We're back home," said Cowper. "How is that?"

"Got lost in the fog, sir. Sorry." Cowper paid his fare, went inside, and pondered how he had been spared from harming himself by the mercy of God. That same evening in 1774, his forty-third year, reflecting on his narrow escape, he wrote this autobiographical hymn:

God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform;

He plants his footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.

You fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds you so much dread

Are big with mercy and shall break in blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace;

Behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face

His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;

The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err and scan his work in vain:

God is his own interpreter, and he will make it plain.

You can well trust Him to save and deliver you from every evil work and preserve you for His heavenly kingdom. He will save and deliver in His own unique way. He always does that for His children. He never fails.

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The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err and scan his work in vain:
God is his own interpreter, and he will make it plain.

[\(God Moves in a Mysterious Way\)](#)

You can well trust Him to save and deliver you from every evil work and preserve you for His heavenly kingdom. He will save and

deliver in His own unique way. He always does that for His children. He never fails.

That's His specialty.

Exodus 15:1-2 Don't Forget To Praise Him

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt him (Exodus 15:1-2).

Today we are coming to the conclusion of our series of messages entitled God Will Make a Way, based on the story of the Children of Israel at the Red Sea in Exodus 14. This story gives us a case study in the way God helps His people when they find themselves trapped in difficult or impossible straits. During the course of these weeks, I've sought to draw ten principles from the text; we've called them, "The Red Sea Rules" for handling life's emergencies.

Red Sea Rule #1, based on the first two verses of Exodus 14, says: When you find yourself in an impossible situation, recognize that God has either placed you there or allowed you to be there for reasons perhaps known at the time only to Himself.

Red Sea Rule #2, as the chapter unfolds, says: Be more concerned for God's glory than for your own relief.

Red Sea Rule #3 is, Acknowledge your enemy, but keep your eyes on the Lord.

Red Sea Rule #4 says, Pray. In Exodus 14:10 we read, "And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord."

Red Sea Rule #5 comes straight from verses 11 through 14: Don't be afraid. Stay calm and confident and give the Lord time to work.

Red Sea Rule #6 is: When you don't know what to do, just do what comes next. Take the next logical step by faith.

The seventh principle says: Envision God's enveloping presence.

Red Sea Rule #8, which says: Trust God to save and deliver in His own unique way. That's His specialty.

Last week we looked at Rule #9: View your current crisis as a faith-builder for the future.

Now today we come to chapter 15 and Red Sea Rule #10: Don't forget to praise Him. What do you think the Israelites did when they reached the eastern banks of the Red Sea? How did they feel when they saw their murderous enemies washed away by massive, collapsing walls of water? What was their reaction to total, miraculous deliverance and security?

They lifted up their voices in praise, worship, and thanksgiving. And that is what we find in chapter 15: Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt him (Exodus 15:1-2).

God Deserves To Hear Our Songs

The first thing to notice is that God deserves to hear our songs. The first words from the mouths of Moses and the Israelites were, "I will sing unto the Lord." Just twenty-four hours before, they were saying, "I am doomed... I will perish... I will doubt." But God had broken through the impossibility, and their sigh of despair had become a song of deliverance.

In the history of the Christian church, some of our greatest hymns and songs have come as God has given peace and deliverance even in the darkest moments. For example, the hymn "Now Thank We All Our God," is to the German nation what the Doxology is to American Christianity, but American Christians have also loved it since the founding of our country. It was written by a Lutheran pastor in the little village of Eilenberg, Saxony, named Martin Rinkart (1586-1649), son of a poor coppersmith. He felt called into the ministry, and after his training he went to live and labor in Eilenberg just as the Thirty Years' War was devastating his area. Floods of refugees streamed into the walled city of Eilenberg. The Swedish army surrounded the city, and inside the walls plague and famine decimated the population. Eight hundred homes were destroyed, and people began dying in increasing numbers. There was a tremendous strain on the pastors, for not only did they have to care for the frightened, the sick, and the dying, they had to conduct dozens of funerals each day. And then the pastors began dying, too.

Finally only Martin Rinkart was left, and he was doing as many as fifty funerals a day. When the Swedes demanded a huge ransom, it was Martin Rinkart who left the safety of the city walls to negotiate with the enemy, and he did it with such courage and faith that there was soon a conclusion of hostilities and the period of suffering ended. But out of that experience Rinkart wrote our great hymn:

Now thank we all our God,
with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things hath done,
in whom his world rejoices;
who from our mother's arms
hath blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

We also find that in our own times of difficulty and perplexity, our hearts are lifted out of darkness and doubt by the power of a good hymn. I was reading just the other day about Rev. Benjamin Weir, the veteran Presbyterian missionary in Lebanon who was kidnapped in the mid-1980s at gunpoint by Shiite Muslims in Beirut and held for sixteen months.

On his first night in captivity, one of his abductors came to him, telling him to face the wall, which he did. "Now take your blindfold off and put this on." The man handed Benjamin a pair of ski goggles in which the eye holes had been covered with thick plastic adhesive tape. They totally blocked out the light. In Weir's mind, the sun had set. But in the twilight there came to his mind the old hymn

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

The words of our Lord came to his mind: If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. And through that song and truth, God gave Benjamin Weir the strength and security to not just abide in captivity, but to abide in Christ and to bear much fruit.

Recently, I've pulled out some old cassette tapes of Christian music that I haven't used in years. I've started using them again in my car's cassette player. I've turned off talk-radio, the news, and the sports. I've even been listening less to the Christian radio stations, as helpful as they are. I've just put on my cassettes of soft, instrumental Christian hymns, and I've found that in that environment my mind more naturally tilts toward praying and meditating on Scripture.

Martin Luther once said, "Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The fathers and prophets wanted nothing else to be associated as clearly with the Word of God as music. I am quite of the opinion that next to theology, there is no art which can be compared to music; for it alone, after theology, gives us rest and joy.... Music is the handmaiden of theology."

A. W. Tozer wrote, "I say without qualification, after the Sacred Scriptures, the next best companion for the soul is a good hymnal.... After the Bible, the hymnbook is next. And remember, I do not say a songbook or a book of gospel songs, but a real hymnal containing the cream of the great Christian hymns left to us by the ages.

"A great hymn embodies the purest concentrated thoughts of some lofty saint who may have long ago gone from the earth and left little or nothing behind him except that hymn...."

"Sometimes our hearts are strangely stubborn and will not soften or grow tender no matter how much praying we do. At such times, it is often found that the reading or singing of a good hymn will melt the ice jam and start the inward affections flowing...."

Tozer continued, "Every Christian should have lying beside his Bible a copy of some standard hymnbook. He should read out of one and sing out of the other, and he will be surprised and delighted to discover how much they are alike."

Someone once said, "The Christian life is simply God's life vibrating through us." The Bible says, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make

music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

So Moses and the Children of Israel celebrated their deliverance that pristine morning by saying, "I will sing unto the Lord...." And their song goes on to say, "I will sing unto the Lord, for He is highly exalted.

God Desires to Be our Sovereign

That brings us to the second thing to notice in Exodus 15:1--God desires to be our Sovereign. We can even say, He demands to be our sovereign, for He is highly exalted. Genuine worship is entirely focused on our infinite, almighty, omni-faceted God. And just notice the way God is described in this extended song of thanksgiving. First as we see in verse 1, He is highly exalted. He has a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God.

Second, He is viewed as utterly victorious. Verses 3ff say: The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea. The deep waters have covered them, they sank to the depths like a stone.

Third, God is viewed as majestically powerful. Reading on in verse 6ff: Your right hand, O Lord, was majestic in power. Your right hand shattered the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble....

But as we progress through this psalm, we also see God as being lovingly accessible, the faithful guide for His people. Look at verses 13ff: In your unending love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.... You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance--the place, O Lord, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established. The Lord will reign for ever and ever.

He reigns and He rules. He reigns over all, and He overrules all, and His children need Him every hour. Recently I met a lady named Miriam Harmon from St. Louis who attended a seminar I was conducting. She told me this story. One night in April, 2000, she arrived at the hospital to sit with her 82-year-old mother-in-law, Evelyn Harmon, who was near death. When Miriam entered the room, she knew the end was near, for Evelyn was lying there, not speaking or moving, eyes shut, unresponsive. Miriam was unable to rouse the older woman until she began singing the hymn, "It is Well with my Soul." After the last stanza, Miriam said, "Mom, if it is well with your soul, blink your eyes."

The old woman willed her eyes opened and closed three times.

"I knew it her heart's desire for her children and grandchildren to come to know the Lord," Miriam later said, "so I decided to pray with her."

Taking her mother-in-law's hand, Miriam began to pray, interceding by name for each of Evelyn's nine children, thirty grandchildren, and sixteen great-grandchildren. Returning home about 10:30, Miriam went to bed and fell asleep. Later in the night, she was jolted awake by her 21-year-old son, Timothy. "Mom, wake up! Mom, Mom, I've been in an accident."

"An accident...! Timothy...!"

"I'm all right, Mom, but let me tell you what happened." While Miriam had been at the hospital that evening, Timothy had been a passenger in a car on Highway 40, traveling from St. Louis to East St. Louis. Another car, trying to pass them, cut in too soon, slamming into their left side, propelling them to the right. Then the vehicle behind them plowed into them, spinning them around broadside, and a tow truck traveling in the opposite direction crashed into them full force.

Timothy first struck the windshield and cracked it open, then he was thrown from the passenger-side window. His shoes, glasses, and watch flew off. He sailed over the guardrails, landed in a patch of grass, and slid into a pond. Looking up, he saw his airborne car coming straight toward him. It landed with a sickening thud one foot away. "But I'm all right, Mom," he said. "A couple of cuts, that's all."

"Timothy," Miriam said, gathering her wits, "your grandmother and I were praying for you at that very moment."

"I knew it, mom," he said. "When I landed on that grass and saw that car coming toward me, all I could say was 'Jesus!' I knew you were praying for me. Like you had prayed for Jeremy."

Jeremy was Miriam's teenage son who worked at a car wash. One Wednesday night shortly before, Miriam had been driving home from a prayer meeting at her church, and as she drove, she was fervently praying for her children. She was so engrossed in prayer that she didn't even look up when she passed the car wash to see if Jeremy was there.

Shortly after, Jeremy came home, badly shaken. "Mom," he said, "I saw you pass by while I was at the car wash."

"I'm sorry, Jeremy. I should have stopped," Miriam said.

"No, let me tell you what happened. At the very moment you passed by, a man had a gun at my head. It was a hold-up. He said, 'Give me your keys and your money.' I said, 'Man, don't do this.' That's when I looked up and saw you pass by. When I looked back at him the man, he was looking at me strangely, but not really at me. He was sort of looking past me, and it was as though he saw something or someone at my shoulder. All at once, he turned and ran."

"Jeremy," said Miriam. "I was praying for you at that very moment."

"I believe you, Mom," said Jeremy. "I believe you."

Who is this God we fear and worship? Who is this one we love and adore? He is the one who hears and answers our prayer. He is the one who cares for His children. He is the one who is highly exalted, utterly victorious, majestically powerful, and lovingly accessible. This is why we can say:

/O worship the King, all glorious above,

And gratefully sing His wonderful love;

Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,

Pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.

/O worship the King, all glorious above,

And gratefully sing His wonderful love;

Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,

Pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.

And this is why the Israelites could say: I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea.

God Designs to Give Us Strength

That brings us to the third thing in Exodus 15: God designs to give us strength. Verse 2 says: The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation. From one end of the Bible to the other, we read of how God strengthens His people

Deuteronomy 33:25 says: As your days may demand, so shall your strength ever be.

Nehemiah 8:10 says: Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

In Psalm 27, David said: The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?

Psalm 46:1 says: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble

Isaiah 26: Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because He trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord, the Lord, there is everlasting strength.

In chapter 40, Isaiah said: Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

In Isaiah 41:10 the Lord says: Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

The Apostle Paul said: Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might; be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

From Genesis to Revelation, we find this simple formula. When the Word goes in, and praise goes up, and faith goes out, God goes forth to deliver His people and give them His strength.

And as He does so, over and over again in your experience and mine, let's remember that He deserves to hear our songs. He

desires to be our Sovereign. He designs to grant us strength.

And in the process, don't forget rule number 10: Let's not forget to praise Him.

Exodus 15 The Lord Showed Him A Tree

Rob Morgan

For the last several weeks, our Sunday morning studies have been from the book of Exodus, the second book of the Bible. The contents of Exodus are so dramatic that they are later mentioned more than 140 times in the Old Testament alone. When Jesus Christ came to the earth, he repeatedly claimed that the writings of Exodus and the other Mosaic books were full of references to Himself. In the book of Acts, more than one-third of Stephen's speech, leading to his martyrdom, is devoted to events described in the book of Exodus. The book of Hebrews goes to great length showing us how the signs and symbols of Exodus pointed toward Jesus Christ. We also know from church history that there are over 450 references to the book of Exodus in the extant writings of the early Church Fathers of the first two centuries following the original apostles. All of history has been mesmerized by the dramatic nature of this book—the birth of Moses, the bondage of the Hebrews, the plagues that fell on Egypt, the slaying of the Passover Lamb, the deliverance from Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the giving of the Ten Commandments, the building of the Tabernacle. It is a book to read and re-read, year after year, and every time we read it we learn new lessons and discover new truths.

In this current series of studies, we are especially interested in seeing how Jesus Christ Himself is prophetically portrayed in the book of Exodus, which was written about 1400 years before he actually came on the scene. So far we have discovered that Christ is foreshadowed in these things:

- The very theme of Exodus is "redemption," and it portends the person and work of Jesus Christ on the cross, how he redeemed his people from the bondage of sin and from death.
- The Angel of the Lord who appeared in the burning bush and later in the pillars of cloud and fire was apparently a Christophany, a special pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament.
- Moses himself was a remarkable forerunner and type of Christ. He later predicted, "God will raise up a Prophet like me," referring to the Messiah, and we can trace many parallels between the life of Moses and that of our Lord Jesus.
- Last week, we discovered how the Passover Lamb served as a clear and poignant picture of the work of Christ on Calvary's Cross. Now today as we continue this study, I want to show you another picture of Calvary's Cross in Exodus 15. Let's begin our reading with verse 22:

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?"

Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood (KJV: a tree). He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the Lord made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them. He said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you."

Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.

Exodus 15 is a most unusual and dramatic chapter. After the Tenth Plague fell across Egypt, after the death of the firstborn, Pharaoh, rising in the night, demanded the Israelites leave instantly and at once. Hurriedly, the Hebrews girded their loins, grabbed their children, snatched up a few possessions, and headed en masse for the border. But only hours later, Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his armies to annihilate them all.

These tired, poor, "huddled masses yearning to breathe free" now found themselves trapped between the sword and the sea. But we know the story, how God fought for them, how a powerful wind drove back the waters from the sea, and how the Israelites passed through the Red Sea between towering walls on either side, their feet upon dry ground. As the last stragglers reached the eastern bank, the walls of water came crashing down, destroying the army of Egypt.

The children of Israel were now both free at last and safe at last. They had left the boundaries of Egypt and they were on their way to Canaan, their home, their Promised Land. A great celebratory cry rose to the heavens, and a song of praise filled the sky. Exodus 15 begins: Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: I will sing unto the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and rider he has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God and I will exalt him.

In verse 20, we read, Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and rider he has hurled into the sea.

But now look at the next verse. The celebration ended. The worship services dismissed. The people again gathered their belongings to start their journey in earnest. And look what happened: Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water.

The Test

How do you explain such a sudden change of fortune? Why would God deliver them through parted walls of waters only to allow them to die of lack of water in the desert? I remember at age eight being on vacation with my parents in the Desert Southwest in July of 1960. My father wanted to drive across the Mojave Desert, but everyone warned him against it. It was unbearably hot; and people died, they said, if their cars overheated and they became stranded. (Back in those days they didn't have the emergency services we have today, or cars that can take that kind of punishment.) Better wait until evening we were told. But my dad had never before seen a desert and he didn't want to go at night when he couldn't see it. So we filled the gasoline tank with fuel, the ice chest with ice, and we put an extra container of water on the grill of the car in front of the radiator. And off we started. No air conditioning. Windows rolled down. Hot as blazes. And with wide eyes we watched the desert pass by, wondering if we'd ever survive the crossing. My job was to sit in the back seat and fill up our cups with ice as we drove along in almost unbearable heat.

We made it fine because we were well prepared and had plenty of water. But others have perished in the desert from lack of water. Can you imagine several hundred thousand people wandering in the desert for three days with absolutely no water for their animals, their children, or themselves?

But that's not all. Just when they thought they were all perishing of thirst, someone near the front of the procession shouted, "Water! Water ahead!" With an enfeebled burst of energy they bolted toward the lake, tongues hanging out, cups ready, children ready to lap up the cool life-sustaining liquid. Imagine their disappointment when the first ones there spewed the water out, faces filled with disgust. The news went out: The water was brackish and undrinkable. The disappointment was staggering.

Why did God allow it to happen? Why did God map out such a route? Why did the Angelic Pillar of Cloud and Fire lead them headlong into a blazing, waterless wasteland? Why the terrible disappointment? The answer is almost hidden away in a little phrase in the last part of verse 25. Four words: There he tested them.

You know, the Bible says that God tests us. He puts us in a difficult or perplexing situation just to see if we've learned anything from past experiences. He wants to develop and mature us, to see what we're made of spiritually.

1 Chronicles 29:17 says: I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity.

Psalms 66 says: For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver.

Proverbs 17:3 says: The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the heart.

Ezekiel 21:13 says: Testings will surely come.

The Bible says that God tests us in various ways, but often he does so by sending some storm of adversity to see if we'll trust and obey him through it. Deuteronomy 8 says: He led you through this vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble you and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you.

Job was tested in this way, through adversity. He said: But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.

Isaiah 48 says: See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

Why do you think the Lord Jesus Christ deliberately sent the disciples in a boat across the Sea of Galilee, knowing full well they were sailing headlong into a violent, life-threatening storm? He was testing the density and consistency of their faith.

James 1 says: Consider it all joy, brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

It may be that some of you are going through a certain trial or difficulty right now. It's going to turn out all right in the end, for God has promised that all things work together for good to those who love him. He intends to use this to strengthen your faith, your character, and your perseverance. But for right now, it's a mess. It's a test.

How did the Israelites do on their test? What grade did they make? They flunked. Look at verses 23-24: When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?"

It is a very natural reaction, and it's probably the very reaction I would have had. But the Lord is displeased with grumbling and murmuring because it betrays a lack of submissive trust in his guidance. In their book on burnout, the psychologists Minirth and Meier discuss this story in Exodus 15, and they define grumbling or murmuring as expressing "resentment, dissatisfaction, anger, or complaint in low or half-muted tones. Murmuring is the opposite of unconditional obedience. It also stands in stark contrast to grateful trust." They go on to say that just as fever indicates the presence of infection, murmuring can show the underlying presence of bitterness in our lives.

It is a spiritual chain of several links: Difficulty à Disappointment à Anger à Bitterness à Grumbling.

How should we respond to adversity and affliction? Difficulty à Perseverance; that is, Patience Trust in God's Presence, His Power, and His Promises.

That's why the Lord was so very displeased with the people's complaints and murmurs. On the surface, a whispered complaint seems no big deal. But it actually reveals a response system that is going in completely the wrong direction.

Numbers 11:1 says that when the people complained, it displeased the Lord (KJV). In Numbers 14:27, the Lord said to Moses and

Aaron, "How long will this wicked community grumble against me?"

1 Corinthians 10:10 says, "Do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel."

Philippians 2 says that we should "do everything without complaining or arguing" so that we may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation in which we shine like stars in the universe as we hold out the word of life.

James 5 says, "You too be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!"

The Tree

Why should we refrain from grumbling? Why should we have a patient, persevering attitude in the midst of affliction? Because things are never as bad as they seem where God is involved. He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we could ask or think. And here by these bitter, brackish waters, he had a plan. Verse 25 says: Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. The King James Versions calls it "a tree." He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

God had confronted them with difficulty and disappointment, not only to test their character, but to display his power. He wanted to perform another miracle for them and to reinforce his watchcare over their journey.

But why a tree? Here was a little uprooted tree, and when Moses threw it into the pond, the water turned from brackish to sweet? I believe that tree is a symbol of the cross of Calvary that turns the waters of our lives from bitter to blessed.

Acts 5:30 says that God raised Jesus from the dead after he had been killed by being hung on a tree.

Paul said that Christ was taken down from the tree and laid in a tomb, and was raised up on the third day.

Galatians 3:13, referring to Christ, says, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

Peter said, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and life for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."

You might remember several years ago when a jetliner crashed on a bitterly cold January evening into the Potomac River. I recall watching the rescue efforts on live television that night. It was in 1982. As Air Florida Flight 90 prepared to take off from Dulles Airport in Washington, flight attendant Kelly Moore strapped herself into her seat, weary because of all the delays due to the weather and the corresponding complaints from her passengers. As the plane traveled down the runway and picked up speed, something didn't seem quite right to Kelly. The plane didn't seem to be getting off the ground as quickly as it should. After only a few moments in the air, the airplane began to shudder violently, and Kelly instinctively tightened her seatbelt. One of the passengers looked at her, terror distorting her face. That was her last conscious memory of the flight.

Kelly Moore later wrote: I have no recollection of the 737 crashing against the 14th Street Bridge over the Potomac River, then plunging toward the ice-crusted river. I don't remember the plane slicing through the three-inch sheet of ice and crumbling into pieces. What I do remember is suddenly being free in the water with no idea how I got there. As I surfaced, I clung to pieces of metal wreckage floating nearby.

As Kelly clung to the wreckage and tried to stay above water, she was aware she was freezing. She lifted her hands one at a time into the air to get them out of the water. She saw people standing on the banks of the Potomac, but unable to help her. I knew the only way we could be rescued was to be lifted out of the water. In my desperation, I did something I had never done before: I prayed. I prayed to somehow be lifted up.

About 20 minutes later, she heard an approaching helicopter, and in a few minutes she was completely lifted out of the water. She was one of only five survivors.

A couple of days later when she was moved from intensive care to a regular room, Kelly awoke to see a nurse standing over her. The woman smiled, her hands on Kelly's hands, and quietly said, "Little girl, I could get in big trouble for telling you this, but God loves you and he saved you from that plane crash for a reason." The nurse proceeded to share the message of Christ, how Jesus loved her, how he had died on the cross to bring sweetness and strength into her life and to assure her of heaven. That day, Kelly responded by giving her life to Jesus Christ.

Due to the television coverage, scores of gifts and cards arrived from all over the world. One of the first she opened contained a Bible, and Kelly immediately started reading in the Gospel of John. And then a woman named Gladys Coggeshall began visiting her and spending time with her, answering questions about the Bible and discipling her. She taught Kelly how to memorize Scripture and how to fill her mind with good thoughts to replace the bad ones.

Kelly became involved in a nearby church. Shortly afterward, God sent a young Christian gentleman into her life, and they were married and started a family. She is now a school teacher, and she sometimes travels around the country to share her testimony of how the Lord used the cross of Jesus Christ to turn her bitterest moments into a blessing that changed her life and brought her lasting peace, joy, hope, and life.

Years ago, I learned a little poem that I sometimes share with the children. It says:

Better Botter bought some butter, but she said, "My butter's bitter."

If I put it in my batter, it will make my batter bitter.

But a bit of better butter, that will make my batter better.

So she bought some better butter, better than her bitter butter,

And she put it in her batter, and it made her batter better.

So twas better Betty Botter bought a bit of better butter.

We need something that will make the bitter better, something that will heal bitter memories, something that will remove bitter attitudes from our hearts. It is the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like a tree thrown into a toxic pool, it transforms the waters of our lives in sweet, optimistic blessings.

The Bible says that God gives us beauty for ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair (Isaiah 61:3).

Perhaps today you need the cross of Christ in your life. You need the power of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus to transform your bitter ponds.

When the woes of life o'ertake me, hopes deceive and fears annoy

Never shall the cross forsake me. Lo! It glows with peace and joy.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure, by the cross are sanctified;

Peace is there that knows no measure, joys that thro' all time abide.

Exodus 16 What Is It?

Numbers 11; Psalm 78; Joshua 5; Deuteronomy 8

Rob Morgan

This week, having a few spare minutes, I sat down at the computer and searched the worldwide web using the words "Perfect Food." Of all of the edibles in the world, I just wondered if there was one food that was virtually perfect. I was surprised at the variety of responses.

- Several web sites claimed that milk was the perfect food—it does a body good.
- Chiquita Brands International claimed that Chiquita Bananas were "quite possibly, the world's most perfect food."
- I found a number of web sites claiming Bee Pollen as the perfect food. One said: Our bodies contain 22 basic elements—enzymes, hormones, vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and many others. These need to be replenished daily. No one food contains them all—except Bee Pollen!
- But another set of health food distributors touted something called "Miracle Shark" as the "Perfect Health Food Supplement." One had a testimonial. Ernestine Howard of Kansas City, MO, wrote: For some time I have suffered from arthritis in my hips, back, neck, and hands... I have tried Motrin, Ibuprofen, Advil and several other drugs, never getting complete relief... After taking Miracle Shark for three months I'm very happy to say, "No More Pain!" Thanks, Miracle Shark.
- On the other hand, The Bean Bag Company is a mail-order, family-owned business out of Sacramento, California, that suggests beans are nature's most perfect food. They point out that beans, which have been an important part of the human diet since 7000 BC, contain no cholesterol or sugar and are high in complex carbohydrates and protein—not to mention fiber.
- And Dr. Karl N. Edwards has a web site in which he insists that "nature's most perfect food" is... the hot dog.

Well, we're here today to solve the controversy. I can tell you that for a period of forty years, God made a certain food available on earth which was absolutely perfect. It was called the bread of heaven and the food of angels, and it was readily available, easy to prepare, pleasant to the taste, and it contained everything needed by the human body—every vitamin, mineral, enzyme, and everything else. It kept an entire nation alive and healthy for 40 years in the midst of a blazing desert. What was it called? The Children of Israel called it "Manna"—a Hebrew word meaning, "What Is It?!" Today, in both this morning and in this evening's messages, I'd like to study this strange food, because even now it is available to us in two different forms.

Exodus 16

First, the biblical data. Would you allow me to lead you through a series of five different passages in the Bible in which manna is described, beginning with Exodus 16? In that text, Moses and the children of Israel have just passed through the Red Sea and entered the desert on their way to the Promised Land. Their first problems dealt with finding sufficient supplies of water and food. The writer of Exodus tells us: In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, "If

only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the 6th day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days..."

That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, "It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Each one is to gather as much as he needs. Take an omer for each person in your tent.'"

The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. And when they measured it by the omer (roughly two quarts), he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Each one gathered as much as he needed.

Then Moses said to them, "No one is to keep any of it until morning."

However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. On the 6th day they gathered twice as much—two omers for each person—and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. He said to them, "This is what the Lord commanded: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.'"

So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. "Eat it today," Moses said, "because today is a Sabbath to the Lord. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days you are to gather it, but on the 7th day, the Sabbath, there will not be any."

Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the 7th day to gather it, but they found none. Then the Lord said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the 6th day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the 7th day; no one is to go out." So the people rested on the 7th day.

The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey...

The Israelites ate manna 40 years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.

What can we learn from Exodus 16 about manna?

- It appeared on the ground as with the dew
- Rather flat and flaky
- Melted in the sun
- White
- Described as "bread," but I believe this means it had the capacity to be made into bread.
- Could be stored in jars
- Spoiled within 24 hours
- Could be prepared in a variety of ways, such as being baked or boiled
- Tasted like wafers made with honey
- Provided all the nutritional needs for the Israelites for 40 years

More information is given to us in the book of Numbers, chapter 11: The manna was like coriander seed and looked like resin. The people went around gathering it, and then ground it in a handmill or crushed it in a mortar. They cooked it in a pot or made it into cakes. And it tasted like something made with olive oil. When the dew settled on the camp at night, the manna also came down.

So we can add this to our description:

- It was like coriander seed.
- Resembled resin
- Could be ground in a mill or crushed in a mortar
- Could be cooked in a pots or made into cakes
- Had a taste resembling olive oil

I feel certain, based on these descriptions, we're talking about some kind of grain. Seed like coriander seed or like little hardened balls of resin. From the earlier passage, it might have been flat, something oats. But the morning dew, when it dried, left behind piles and heaps of this unusual grain. It could be scooped up easily, carried in jars, then ground up or crushed like wheat and used to make many different foods just like soybeans. What did it taste like? It had traces of sweetness like honey, and the wholesome nutty taste of fine olive oil.

Psalm 78

There is another place in Scripture in which manna is described. Psalm 78 says: (God) gave a command to the skies above and opened the doors of the heavens; he rained down manna for the people to eat, he gave them the grain of heaven. Men ate the bread of angels; he sent them all the food they could eat.

What does the writer mean here by describing manna as the "grain of heaven" and the "bread of angels." Well, every commentary I looked at suggested something different. Some took it quite literally and said that manna is literally the food eaten by the angels in heaven. Many commentaries suggested that the poet here was just using figurative language to describe the supernatural nature of the food. Others say that the angels were instrumental in delivering the manna to earth. Leopold, in his commentary on the Psalms, called this a "rich figurative expression," and said, "To seek from this expression to establish the doctrine that angels literally ate manna would be stretching the point beyond what was intended. It is rather: food good enough for angels."

Joshua 5

We do know one more thing, however, about manna. We know the day that it stopped. The serving of the manna began in Exodus 16, shortly after the Children of Israel had passed through the Red Sea and began their wilderness wandering. And when did it end? In Joshua 5, just after the Israelites had passed into the Promised Land, just before they marched around the city of Jericho. Joshua 5:10ff says: On the evening of the 14th day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan.

Deuteronomy 8

And now a final Old Testament passage, the one I would like to "zero in" on. The book of Deuteronomy is composed of the final sermons Moses gave to the younger generation of Israelites just before they ended their wilderness wanderings and marched over the River Jordan to take possession the land of Canaan. This is what Moses said in Deuteronomy 8: Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these 40 years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers have known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Here, Moses said a mouthful. He said, in effect, that what manna is to the body, the Word of God is to the soul. He drew a comparison between manna and the Written Word of God. His words were so significant that Jesus later drew from them and quoted them to the devil during the temptation in the Gospels.

Three Comparisons

How, then, is manna a picture of the Word of God? We could draw a dozen good parallels, but I'd like to end this morning's study by mentioning only three of them.

First, it has a supernatural origin, it comes from God, and it is sent down from heaven. 2 Timothy 3 says that all Scripture is inspired (or breathed) out by God. Peter said that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Isaiah tells us that the Word of God comes forth from the mouth of God like rain and snow coming down from heaven.

Second, it sustains life. God didn't create our bodies to be perpetual motion machines. We need regular intakes of nourishment to keep running, and if we don't get adequate nutrition, we grow weak and we eventually die. Our verse here in Deuteronomy 8 says the same is true spiritually. We have an inner hunger which can only be satisfied by feeding on the Word of God. Jeremiah said: Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart (Jer. 15:16, KJV).

I was reading this week in the current issue of Decision Magazine and I found two different articles that illustrate this perfectly. The first was written by a woman who had been abused and abandoned by her father. For years she lived in utter frustration and anger, trying to win his approval and fill up the void in her life caused by his rejection. At last she just decided to hate him, and her bitterness consumed her and poisoned her personality and her relationships. At last a friend invited her to church and she heard the message of the Bible--that God is the Father we have all always wanted. He will never leave or abandon us. He loved us so much that He sent Jesus Christ to die for us. She found Jesus Christ as her savior, then began to read the Bible regarding her embittered and disappointed attitudes. God used verse after verse to remold her mind. One Scripture in particular spoke to her and she taped it to her mirror: "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created in true righteousness and holiness." Another verse said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." God used verse after verse in her life, and passage after passage in her heart to help her grow into maturity.

The other article was by a man in Canada who got himself into a state of extreme frustration over his job. He and his wife had three children, but his job took him away from home much of the time. The novelty of traveling on an expense account quickly faded. "The sports car, the suits and the cell phone did not compensate for the temptations awaiting me during every business trip and the sacrifice of being away from home," he wrote.

He and his wife developed a lifestyle just a little beyond their means, and the pressures of debt and job and family and travel became too intense for him, and he found himself coming apart at the seams. What did he do? He took a couple of days off, shoved off in his canoe, and floated down the river with his Bible. He told himself it was time to chart a new course. During his canoe trip he gave himself over to reading the book of 1 Peter, and several passages stuck into him, he said, like barbed hooks. The first warned him to rid himself of all deceit and hypocrisy. Another told him to crave the sincere milk of the word so that by it he could grow. A third passage told him to humble himself under God's almighty hand and to cast all his cares upon the Lord. As he fed his soul with the Word of God and prayed, out there alone on the river, he made some important decisions that changed his life and that saved his family.

There is no other book that can do for us what the Word of God can do. It meets all the nutritional requirements for the soul, and contains all we need for life and godliness. It thoroughly equips us for every good work. Yet too many of us are so busy feeding our minds with so much junk food--too many novels and magazines and television and movies--that we give the Scriptures barely a passing nod. No wonder we shrivel up spiritually. Our spiritual growth is directly proportionate to the amount of time and effort we put into the study of Scripture.

That leads me to the third way that manna is like the Word of God. It must be gathered day by day.

What a different world this would be if every person on this planet spent time every day in serious Bible study and prayer. But Charles Spurgeon once complained to his congregation in London: There is dust enough on some of your Bibles to write 'damnation' with your fingers.

Someone said, "The devil is not afraid of a Bible that has dust on it."

And someone else quipped. "If all the neglected Bibles were dusted simultaneously, there would be dust storm that would blot out the sun for a week."

But some of you might be saying that you've tried to study the Bible and you've gotten nothing out of it. Let me give you the same advice that R. A. Torrey once gave to a man. Torrey was a close friend and associate of evangelist D. L. Moody and one of the most popular Bible teachers at the beginning of the 20th century.

A man once approached Torrey after a conference, a Dr. Congdon, and complained of getting nothing out of his Bible study. The Scripture seemed to be dry as dust. "Please tell me how to study it so that it will mean something to me."

"Read it," replied Dr. Torrey.

"I do read it."

"Read it some more."

"How?"

"Take some book and read it twelve times a day for a month."

"What book could I read that many times a day, working as many hours as I do?"

"Try Second Peter," replied Torrey.

The man later said, "My wife and I read Second Peter three or four times in the morning, two or three times at noon, and two or three times at dinner. Soon I was talking Second Peter to everyone one I met. It seemed as though the stars in the heavens were singing the story of Second Peter. I read Second Peter on my knees, marking passages. Teardrops mingled with the crayon colors, and I said to my wife, "See how I have ruined this part of my Bible."

"Yes," she said, "but as the pages have been getting black, your life has been getting white."

Every one of us is curious about the heavenly manna that sustained the children of Israel during their 40 years of wandering. If we could announce that tonight, here at , we had actually obtained some of this grain and were going to offer samples of genuine manna, we'd have people flying in from all over the world, curious and eager to taste and see this supernatural food. We'd have nutritionists here by the hundreds. We'd have the television networks here, and a thousand entrepreneurs wanting the rights for worldwide distribution.

But we do have a daily supply of manna, sent down morning by morning for the nourishment of our lives and for the delight of our souls.

For Moses said, "He fed you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers have known, to teach you that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

Exodus 17 Streams In The Desert

Numbers 20

Rob Morgan

"To really enjoy the book of Exodus," said William McDonald in the Believers' Bible Commentary, "we need to look for Christ in it." We have been doing that for several weeks, finding glimpses of Jesus in the second book of the Bible. And we have thus far discovered that 1400 years before He was born in Bethlehem, the Lord Jesus Christ was accurately previewed in Exodus through:

- The theme of the book itself—redemption
- The angel of the Lord in the burning bush and in the pillars of cloud and fire
- The prophet Moses himself who was a type of Christ
- The Passover lamb of Exodus 12
- The tree that made bitter waters sweet in Exodus 15
- The manna that fell from heaven, portending the one who said, "I am the Bread of life."

Now today I would like to show you another vivid prefiguration of Christ in the book of Exodus, found in chapter 17:

The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink."

Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?"

But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

Then Moses cried out to the Lord, "What am I to do with these people. They are almost ready to stone me."

The Lord answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff

with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the place Messah and Meribah [testing and quarreling] because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

A Thirsty Land

There are five elements here that have far-reaching significance. The first is the Thirsty Land in which the Israelites found themselves. It was the Desert of Sin. If you take the word Sin and add the letters ai you have Sinai, and that's where they were. So it was a geographical name, but in English it comes out very appropriately here as the Desert of Sin, for they were quarreling against God there and finding that the Desert of Sin is a very thirsty place.

We live in a thirsty world now, as well. People are thirsting for intimacy and for enjoyment in life. USA Today recently carried a story entitled, "Spending a Fortune on Fun." The newspaper profiled a family living in the Boston suburbs. Keith and Sarah Hartstein have two daughters, two sons—and cable TV, Nintendo 64, two PCs, and 3 stereo systems. They regularly go to movies, buy a lot of CDs and love to rent videos. They bowl. They golf. They've been to Disney World in Orlando and they go to Hershey Park every Fourth of July. They regularly take ski vacations and have flown the whole family to Mexico. They figure they spend at least \$7,500 a year of entertainment.

They are typical Americans. USA Today said that the price we pay to amuse ourselves has risen at a rate triple that of inflation over the past five years, but few people are complaining. We'll spend just about anything for intimacy, entertainment, and for enjoyment in life.

I was reading the other day about Ricky Martin, the new Puerto Rican vocalist who has recently been on the covers of magazines like People, TV Guide, and even Time. His music videos are very sexual, sensual and sinful. But despite his sudden fame and wealth, he admits that he has an inner thirst for meaning and significance in life that is hard to satisfy. In an interview he told of needing to be alone frequently, to go off and be by himself so that he can try to make sense of life. He said that one particular song he sings entitled I Am Made of You perfectly describes where he is now in his spiritual search.

The words say: With your love show me how to live, 'cause you are made of me and I am made of you.... We'll walk together through the fire, through the darkness to the sun like two raging rivers full of passion. At the ocean we are one... With your soul, walk my spirit through.

The song could be a very passionate song between two lovers, but from what Ricky Martin said, it seems to have religious undertones, and to be saying something like this: "God, whoever and whatever you are, I am made of you and you are made of me and we are like two rivers who will merge together one day. Until then, walk my spirit through this life and show me how to live."

It is a vague, nebulous, new-age sort of aspiration that doesn't offer any concrete theology or objective truth, but it does represent the fact that even the most famous people in the world, despite all their money, power, sex, and fame, still thirst for something more. They thirst for God.

Here in Exodus 17, the people cried out to Moses, and Moses cried out to God: "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me." And the Lord directed him to a solid rock within that thirsty land.

A Solid Rock

Now, we have it on New Testament authority that this rock was symbolically a type of Christ. 1 Corinthians 10, referring back to this story, says, "That rock was Christ." All the way through the Bible, the Lord Jesus is pictured as being a rock-solid, a bulwark, a firm foundation upon which to build our lives.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee

Deuteronomy 32 refers to the Rock our Savior. The Psalmist said, "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19:14). Isaiah predicted that when the Messiah came He would be a Rock that caused men to stumble (8:14). Daniel pictured Christ and his kingdom as a Rock cut without hands that filled all the earth. Peter wrote, "I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,' and 'a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.' They stumble because they disobey the message..." (1 Peter 2:6-8).

We live in an age of endless confusion, diversion, and entertainment; but Christ is a solid Rock, and on this Rock we stand. Friends may fail us, foes assault us; we can't always answer all the questions or resolve all the difficulties, but on this Rock we stand. Values

are plunging and morals are falling. Evil is called good, and good, evil. We live in perilous times, in the midst of a wicked and corrupt generation. But on this Rock we stand, as the old song says:

My hope is built on nothing less

Than Jesus blood and righteousness;

I dare not trust the sweetest frame,

But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ the Solid Rock I stand

All other ground is sinking sand.

A Mighty Blow

But there is a third element in this equation as we see it described in Exodus 17:6. The Lord commanded Moses to "Strike the rock!" And Moses lifted high his rod—the rigid, inflexible rod of the lawgiver—and with all his might he brought it down against the rock in the presence of the elders of Israel.

What was the meaning of it all? It was a powerful, visual preview of what would happen on Mt. Golgotha 1400 years later when the rod of the law of God struck Jesus Christ, the Solid Rock, in the presence of the leaders of the nation of Israel. Notice that Jesus died by being repeatedly struck. He was struck on the face and head by the soldiers who tormented him. He was struck across the back with the leather whip. His hands were affixed fast to the cross by nails struck by the brutal hammer blows. He was struck and pierced with the soldier's lance. But the greatest stroke came from unyielding rod of the holiness and justice of God as He bore the blows we deserved and took our place on the old rugged cross. Isaiah 53 says: Yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

Beneath the cross of Jesus, I fain would take my stand

The shadow of a Mighty Rock within a weary land.

A Living Stream

And what happened when Moses struck the rock? Suddenly from its riven side there came forth a living stream, rivers of living waters, living water from the smitten rock. The Psalmist later said that the water ran in the desert like a river.

Over one thousand years later, on another hot day, a man named Jesus Christ sat down beside a well, and a woman came to draw water. Jesus asked for a drink, and she responded with surprise. "You are a Jew," she said, "and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" Jesus replied, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

A few days later at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, on the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scriptures has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." And the apostle John, in describing this event, explained that he was referring to the Holy Spirit.

At the very end of the Bible, in Revelation 22:17, we have the final invitation to come to Jesus Christ extended in the pages of Scripture with these words: The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the of the water of life freely."

P.S.

Now there is an interesting postscript to the Exodus 17 story. Some time later, in Numbers 20, we again find the children of Israel in a desert without water: Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They quarreled with Moses and said, "If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the Lord! Why did you bring the Lord's community into this desert that we and our livestock should die here? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink.

Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and fell facedown, and the glory of the Lord appeared to them. The Lord said to Moses, "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to the rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.

So Moses took the staff from the Lord's presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."

The Lord kept Moses from entering the Promised Land because in this second incident he angrily struck the rock instead of just speaking to it as commanded. Why was that such a serious offense? Because it marred the typology. Christ was crucified once for all, and we partake of the living waters of life and of the Holy Spirit by day-by-day faith as we abide in Him. Jesus isn't crucified over and over; He was crucified once. But He yields forth his life-giving, soul-quenching waters continually. He meets our deepest needs. He fills us with His Spirit. He gives us guidance and grace day by day as we come and ask Him, in simple faith believing.

Recently, someone sent me the story of a very wealthy man who, with his devoted son, shared a passion for art collecting. They traveled around the world together, adding only the finest paintings to their collection. Included among them were works by Picasso, Van Gogh, and Monet. The old man was a widower, but his son filled up the void in his life, and this was their common bond.

But war erupted, and the young man enlisted and was sent overseas. Day after day, the old father prayed, held his breathe, and waited for news. One fall day near Thanksgiving the dreaded telegram came, bordered in black. The young man had died bravely in combat, trying to evacuate those caught under fire. Distraught and lonely, the old man faced the upcoming holidays with anguish and sorrow. On Christmas morning, a knock sounded at the door. The father opened it to find a soldier there, carrying a small package. As they talked, the soldier said, "Your son and I became very close, and he told me all about your joint art collection. I myself am an artist, and I wanted to give you this."

The man took this package in his feeble hands, unwrapped the package, and there was a portrait of his son in striking detail. It wasn't a masterpiece, but it was the most precious work of art the man had ever seen. As he gazed at it, he wept. And as the young soldier left, the lonely father pushed aside thousands of dollars worth of art and hung the portrait of his son in the prized spot over the fireplace.

As the months passed, the old man received letter after letter, telling him of his son's bravery and selflessness, and of how many lives he had saved and how many more he had touched. With each passing day the portrait over the fireplace became more precious, and he told his friends that it was the greatest gift he had ever received.

The following Spring, the old man grew ill and passed away. The art world was full of anticipation, wanting to get its hands on this man's fabulous collection. A day was set to auction it all off, and according to the old man's instruction the first painting was one that was not on any museum's list—the painting of the man's son. When the auctioneer asked for an opening bid, the room was silent.

"Who will open the bidding at \$100?" he asked. "The moments stretched on awkwardly, and finally someone in the back of the room said, "Let's go on to the next piece."

"No," replied the auctioneer. "We have to sell this one first."

Finally a neighbor of the man spoke. "Will you take fifty dollars for the painting? That's all I have, but I knew the boy and I liked him, so I'd like to have it."

"Fifty dollars, we have fifty dollars," shouted the auctioneer. "Will anyone go higher?" No one did. "Going once, going twice, gone." And the gavel fell.

Everyone breathed a deep sigh of relief, thankful that now they could proceed with the "real" auction and get their hands on the masterpieces. But imagine their shock when the auctioneer suddenly declared that the proceedings were over. A loud clamor arose. Stunned disbelief. "What do you mean it's over?" the people shouted. "What about all the masterpieces?"

The auctioneer replied, "It's very simple. According to the will, whoever takes the son gets it all."

The Bible says that the Rock that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. When we have Jesus Christ we have a firm foundation for our lives, for our marriages, for our homes, for our children, for our future. He said, "Whoever believes in me, from his innermost being shall come rivers of living water. I wonder, then, if these old words of Fanny Crosby could serve as your testimony today:

All the way my Savior leads me

Cheers each winding path I tread;

Gives me grace for every trial,
Feeds me with the Living Bread.
Though my weary steps may falter,
And my soul a-thirst may be,
Gushing from the rock before me,
Lo! A Spring of joy I see.
Gushing from the rock before me,
Lo! A Spring of joy I see.

Exodus 25:1-9 THAT I MAY DWELL AMONG YOU

Rob Morgan

We have begun a series of studies into God's Tent—the Tabernacle in the Wilderness—a subject that occupies an amazing fifty chapters in the Bible.

The background is this. In the book of Exodus, the children of Israel have been liberated from Egyptian slavery. They have crossed the Red Sea and are camping in the desert at the base of Mount Sinai. Moses, having already been on the Mount to receive the Ten Commandments, is summoned to the top of Sinai again to meet with the Lord. This time, Moses receives a set of detailed instructions for the building of a portable worship center, this aforementioned Tabernacle

In the introductory paragraph, Exodus 25:1-9, Moses is commanded to receive an offering from everyone whose heart prompts him to give. And here, at the outset of the Bible's teachings regarding the Tabernacle, we are told why God is so interested in the construction of such a tent. There is a key verse in this paragraph that states simply and clearly the ultimate purpose of the Tabernacle. See if you can spot it as we read today's passage:

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. And this is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats' hair; ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate. And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the Tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it (Exodus 25:1-9).

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Why build collapsible, portable, multi-million dollar canvas worship center in the desert? Why spend \$30-plus million dollars for a tent? This question, as answered in the passage we've just read, goes to the very heart of what the Tabernacle was all about, and it goes to the very heart of God Himself.

The key phrase to understanding the Tabernacle is in verse 8: And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. Keil and Delitzsch, in their famous commentary of the Old Testament, said that the Tabernacle was a visible bond of fellowship in which God could manifest Himself to His people and where they might draw near to Him as their God.

God is Omnipresent

As we consider this, we must say, first of all, that God, being God and therefore being infinite, is omnipresent. In other words, He is always everywhere. We sometimes use the word "transcendent" to describe this. The word transcendent means to go beyond the limits of. Trans is a prefix meaning beyond, and scend means to climb. God climbs beyond. He fills and over-spills the universe. He is always everywhere, and there is no where that He is not.

This week, scientists released some of the most recent pictures sent back to earth from the Hubble Space Telescope. The transmissions from the telescope were released on this Independence Day week because the pictures showed a giant star exploding with colors that included red, white, and blue. It was the remnants of a supernova, a star that reportedly exploded 10,000 years ago. Its light have been traveling for 10,000 years at the speed of light, and we are just now seeing it.

How can anyone comprehend the size and immensity of this universe? Yet God fills all of time and space, and He transcends the cosmos. The Psalmist referred to this in Psalm 139:

Is there anyplace I can go to avoid your Spirit? To be out of your sight? If I climb to the sky, you're there! If I go underground, you're there! If I fly on morning's wings to the far western horizon, You'd find me in a minute—You're already there waiting! (Peterson).

An ancient mystic, Hildebert of Lavardin, wrote, "God is over all things, under all things; outside all; within but not enclosed; without but not excluded; above but not raised up; below but not depressed; wholly above, presiding; wholly beneath, sustaining; wholly within, filling."

Yet we have this remarkable truth: That while God, in His transcendent infinitude, is everywhere, He wants to dwell with each and every human being within the context of a personal relationship. In Isaiah the Lord put it this way: For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him (also) who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

God Dwelled With Adam and Eve

When we open the Bible to the book of Genesis, one of the first things we learn about God is that He both created and desired to dwell with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The book of Genesis speaks of God's creating the first couple using very personal and congenial terms.

Then God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to our likeness.... So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them....

And God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it....

And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone...."

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day....

Now, I'm sure I'll never really understand this. Almighty God, being God, has no needs whatsoever. He is entirely self-contained, self-sufficient, self-existing, self-sufficient. He once said, "I Am Who I Am." He does not have an existential need for human fellowship. Yet for some reason He desired an intelligent creation whom He could love and with whom He could fellowship. He thus created Adam and Eve, and He delighted to come down and walk with them in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day. He delighted to dwell with His people.

God Dwelled Among the Children of Israel

And as we've already seen, when the Israelites were delivered from Egypt, the Lord came down to dwell among them as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He tabernacled among them. In Exodus 29:45, the Lord tells Moses, "I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God."

In chapter 24, He prescribed the building of a Tabernacle to serve as His dwelling place.

In Exodus 29:46: "And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them."

Leviticus 24:11-12 says: "I will set My Tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people."

In Numbers 35:34, the Lord tells the Israelites: "Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel."

Where were the children of Israel living? In the desert. So the Lord moved into the desert to be with them. Under what conditions were the Israelites living? They were living in tents made of goat skins. So the Lord choose to live in a tent of goat skin in the middle of the tribes.

After the Tabernacle was built, the Lord actually moved in, very much as you and I might move into a new house. I remember when Katrina and I built our house, we were so excited and eager to move in, that we actually moved our mattresses up there and started living in it a few days before it was even finished. Well, look at the way the book of Exodus ends—what an ending for a book:

Then the cloud covered the Tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the Tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. Whenever the cloud

was taken up from above the Tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was above the Tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

Later, when the Tabernacle was replaced by the Temple, the same thing happened. God descended in the clouds of glory to inhabit His dwelling place among His people.

And throughout the Old Testament we have assurances of God's presence with His people. The Psalmist said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." Another great verse, Isaiah 41:10, has been one of my favorite verses since childhood. As paraphrased in a famous hymn it says:

Fear not, I am with Thee, O be not dismayed,

For I am Thy God; I will still give thee aid.

I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,

Upheld by my gracious, omnipotent Hand

God Dwelled Among Us Through Christ

Then we come to the New Testament, and we have the birth of one whose God-given name is Emmanuel – God With Us. I'd like for you to look with me at John 1:14:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we behold His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

There are several different features to this verse that make it remarkable. One is the title used here for the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Word. The actual Greek term John used was the familiar Greek term, *logos* - logos. It means message, something that was spoken, a communication.

In other words, Jesus is God's message to us. He is God's ultimate sermon for us. He didn't just come to share the word, He was the Word and He is the Word. Verse 1 says, "In the beginning was the Word—the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Lord Jesus Christ was with God, and the Lord Jesus Christ was God."

But this one who was God Himself—the Word—took upon Himself humanity and became flesh. He became a human being and—notice this verb in verse 14—He dwelled among us. The actual Greek word used by John is *skhnoww*. It means literally, to live in a tent. Some translations say, "The Word became flesh and tented among us." This is the Greek word for of the basic Hebrew word that is translated "Tabernacle," and some translations literally put it, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us."

The Old Testament Tabernacle was a "type"—a foreshadowing, a prediction, a prophecy—of our Lord Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God with Us, who came down to earth, born of a virgin, and tabernacled among us. He is our Tabernacle.

We live in this world, and so Christ, wanting to dwell with us, choose to live in this world. We live in bodies of flesh and blood, so He choose to live in a body of flesh and blood. And why did He do it? Because sin and disobedience had entered the human race, and death had entered the human bloodstream. Jesus Christ, though He was God, became a man, tabernacled among us, died in our place and rose again, that we might have ongoing, unbroken, eternally-satisfying fellowship with the God who desires to be with us.

God Dwells in the Midst of His Church

Next, we can say that God dwells in the midst of His church.

On the day of Pentecost, the fire of God's presence fell upon the first Christians just as it had upon the Tabernacle in Exodus 40, and later on the temple. He indwelt His church and His Christians just as He had indwelt the Tabernacle and later the temple.

Jesus lives within His people through His Spirit. 1 Corinthians 3:16 says: Do you not know that you are the temple—the Tabernacle, the dwelling place—of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

And later in chapter 6, Paul adds, Or do you not know that your body is the temple—the Tabernacle, the dwelling place—of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

The last words Jesus spoke in Matthew's Gospel was a promise to be with us always, even to the end of the world, even to the end of the age. And one of the great secrets of the Victorious Christian life is learning to practice the presence of God.

I was reading the other day a wonderful missionary biography that illustrates this perfectly. Missionary Bertha Smith arrived in Shanghai on September 3, 1917, and spent her first year in Beijing, in language study. She was then assigned to a remote area in the interior of China. There were other missionaries there, but they were older and she was still in her twenties. She had no close friends, nor anyone she could really talk to. There she was, far from home in an age before instant communications, in a foreign culture, and very much alone. She began to suffer horrible bouts of loneliness and homesickness, and then she fell victim to self-pity. Her spirits were on the verge of collapse, and she lost the joy of the Lord.

But one day she went for a walk, and she talked to the Lord like this: "I did not come to China of my own accord. In Your Word You say that when we go to tell people about You, You go with us, even unto the end of the age. Now the end of the age has not come, so this promise includes today, right now!"

She began to praise God for His presence, and suddenly she sensed Him there with her, just as real and vivid as if Christ were walking beside her physically.

She plunged back into her studies and work with renewed zest, and every afternoon she went walking in the fields, talking with the Lord. She carried her New Testament and memorized choice verses, stopping occasionally to read one and then to repeat it over and over to the Lord as she walked.

Sometimes she took her hymnbook and learned hymns the same way, often changing pronouns from third person to second person, singing not just about the Lord, but to Him.

She later gave this remarkable testimony: "Through the years, I have never had another lonely moment on land, sea, or in the air"

She learned the secret of practicing the presence of God. Have you? Are you learning to live in conscious awareness of God's abiding presence day and night?

God Dwells In the New Jerusalem

And let me show you one final thing. Turn to Revelation 21. This describes what we sometimes call the "eternal state." After time and history have expired, after the Great Tribulation, after the Second Coming of Christ, after the Millennium, after all the events have taken place in the preceding chapters of the book of Revelation, where will we be and how will we who know the Lord Jesus spend eternity?

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven, saying, Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

The Lord is going to vacate His home in the highest heavens and move the Tabernacle of His presence to the New Earth, and so shall He dwell with us forever.

But notice the warning in verse 8: But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

I think one of the most terrible things about hell will be the utter, existential, cosmic, unending loneliness. No God with whom to fellowship. No other human being with whom to speak. Forever and ever in a state of blackened aloneness.

Have you ever been homesick? Ever needed a kind word? Ever wanted a friend? Ever needed someone with whom to share your life? We all have those needs, and can you imagine being condemned to utter and absolute solitary confinement for eternity?

That's why Jesus came to this earth, to Tabernacle among us and to offer Himself in our place on the cross, bearing our sins, shedding His blood, becoming a literal bridge to span the gulf between the Holy God and ourselves.

Have you ever received the gift of God, which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord? Do you need God's presence in your life? Do you desire His fellowship? He is standing at the door, knocking, desiring to come in, to live with you, to dwell with you by His grace. Will you open the door and let Him in?

Out of the ivory palaces,

Into a world of woe,

Only His great, eternal love

Made my Savior go.

Exodus 25:1-9 THE HEAVENLY TABERNACLE

Rob Morgan

The Lord said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and hides of sea cows; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this Tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you (Exodus 25:1-9).

This is the third week in a row in which I've chosen this passage for our Sunday morning Scripture reading. We've begun a series of messages on the subject of God's Tent—the remarkable Tabernacle in the wilderness. Two weeks ago we dealt with the financing of the Tabernacle, and we focused on verse 2: Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give. Last week we looked at the purpose of the Tabernacle on verse 8: Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Now, today, our focus is on verse 9: Make this Tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.

The Children of Israel, having been liberated from Egypt and delivered through the parted waters of the Red Sea, had come to this mountain and encamped there. Moses had already been to the top of Mt. Sinai to receive the moral law, the Ten Commandments, and now, beginning in Exodus 25, he is again ascending Mount Sinai to receive the details for the building of the Tabernacle, which was to represent the abiding presence of God among His people.

In verse 9, the Lord told Moses, "I'm going to show you a pattern. I'm about to show you a model. I'm about to give you a set of blueprints. Make sure, when you build this Tabernacle, to build it exactly according to the pattern you have seen here on Mount Sinai."

Now, this admonition is repeated several times. Ex 25:40 says: See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.

Numbers 8:4 says: This is how the lampstand was made: It was made of hammered gold—from its base to its blossoms. The lampstand was made exactly like the pattern the Lord had shown Moses.

In the book of Acts, when Stephen was preaching his famous sermon in chapter 7, he said: Our forefathers had the Tabernacle of Testimony with them in the desert. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen.

Now, I'd like to show you another passage. Many years later, when the Israelites had settled down in the Promised Land and established Jerusalem as their capital, the Tabernacle became very old and tattered, and that the nation of Israel was no longer nomadic. They were an established nation in the land God had promised the descendants of Abraham. So it came into the heart of King David to retire the Tabernacle, as it were, and to replace it with a permanent structure, called the Temple. The Temple was merely a solid, permanent, larger version of the portable Tabernacle. It was laid out the same, with the courtyard, the furnishings, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place. Look at 2 Samuel 7:

After the king was settled in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent." Nathan replied to the king, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you." That night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying: "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'"

And the Lord went on to say that while He would give King David the plans for the building of the temple, it would be King Solomon who would actually build it. Look at 1 Chronicles 28:

David summoned all the officials of Israel to assemble at Jerusalem... King David rose to his feet and said: "Listen to me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it. But God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood...'

6 He said to me: 'Solomon your son is the one who will build my house and my courts....

11 Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement. 12 He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things...

19 "All this," David said, "I have in writing from the hand of the LORD upon me, and he gave me understanding in all the details of the plan." 20 David also said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the LORD is finished.

And so both the portable Tabernacle and the permanent Tabernacle (the Temple) were built according to patterns and plans that came from heaven.

What this seems to be indicating is that the early Tabernacle, this tent with its complex of curtains and furnishings in the wilderness, was, in some sense, modeled after the actual dwelling place of Almighty God Himself in the Highest Heaven.

The Bible teaches that there is a heavenly temple. Psalm 11:4 says: The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord is on His heavenly throne.

In describing his call to the ministry in chapter 6 of his book, Isaiah describes seeing the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

In Revelation, chapter 15, this temple is somewhat described for us:

5 After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the Tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened. 6 Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. 7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

According to Randall Price, in his book, *The Coming Last Days Temple*, many of the ancient Jewish rabbis believed that the earthly temple was positioned exactly parallel to the heavenly temple, so that the Holy of Holies below is aligned in sync with the Holy of Holies above, so that God's presence can be in both the heavenly and earthly Holy of Holies simultaneously. Therefore, even today, though there is not currently a Jewish temple sitting on Jerusalem's Temple Mount, the site remains holy, for it is sanctified by this terrestrial-celestial juxtaposition.

Now, most Bible scholars would not take things nearly that far, and I certainly don't. In fact, most conservative Bible scholars would say that some of this information about a heavenly temple is to be taken, to some degree, figuratively. I called two friends with impeccable Biblical credentials, and I asked them, "Do you believe that there is literally a physical, three-dimensional Tabernacle or Temple in the highest heaven after which the early Tabernacle and Temple were modeled?"

One man said that the thought heaven itself was that Temple or Tabernacle, that that wasn't necessarily an actual building in heaven, but that since heaven was the dwelling place of God in heaven, there is a sense in which the whole of the highest heaven was the Tabernacle/Temple.

My other consultant expressed his belief that the earthly Tabernacle and Temple were earthly representations of the spiritual realities of heaven.

So, I don't want to go too far. But I'll have to be honest and say that my opinion includes three things:

First, as we said last week, God is omnipresent and transcendent, He fills the universe. He is not limited to one place, either on earth

or in heaven. There is no where in the universe or out of the universe where God is not.

Second, as it relates to understanding heaven, Paul said, "Now we see through a glass darkly." And so I would be foolish to be too dogmatic in my specific interpretations of Exodus 25:9, Make this Tabernacle and all its furnishing exactly like the pattern I will show you.

Third, having said all that, I in fact do believe that in the highest heaven, there is a real heavenly Temple, vast and indescribable, and God's throne is there, literally in that temple, in the Holy of Holies, surrounded by His holy angels.

When I was eight years old, my family took an extended automobile trip "Out West." I still remember parts of that trip, especially the day we went to Disneyland. This was, of course, before anyone ever heard of Disney World in Florida, but everyone knows about Disneyland in California. One of the most exciting things about the day was seeing the great mountain that rose up in the middle of the park—the Matterhorn. I thought it was just breathtaking. I later learned that it wasn't a real mountain, but a greatly reduced copy of the real Matterhorn in the Swiss Alps, that rises up to an elevation of nearly 15,000, and is one of the most popular and dangerous mountains in all the world to ascend.

The Tabernacle in the wilderness was only a miniature copy of the heavenly temple in glory.

So there you are. My opinion, for what it's worth. But now, I want to devote the rest of the time to showing you something else. As we'll see later in this series, one of the main functions of the earthly Tabernacle occurred once a year on the Day of Atonement—Yom Kippur, the "Good Friday" of the Old Testament. This was and is the holiest day in the Jewish faith. It is described for us in Leviticus 16.

The Day of Atonement had one purpose—to avert the wrath of God for the sins of the people and to insure His continued dwelling among them. Very little is said anymore about the holiness and the wrath of God, and about the dangers of Hell. The Los Angeles Times ran a story last month (June 19, 2002) with this headline: "Hold The Fire and Brimstone: Mention of hell from pulpits is at an all-time low. The downplaying of damnation shows the influence of secularism on Christian theology."

Here are some excerpts from the article:

In churches across America, hell is being frozen out as clergy find themselves increasingly hesitant to sermonize on Christianity's outpost for lost souls.... Hell's fall from fashion indicates how key portions of Christian theology have been influenced by a secular society that stresses individualism over authority and the human psyche over moral absolutes. The rise of psychology, the philosophy of existentialism and the consumer culture have all dumped buckets of water on hell.

The tendency to downplay damnation has grown in recent years as nondenominational ministries, with their focus on everyday issues such as child-rearing and career success, have proliferated and loyalty to churches has deteriorated.

"It's just too negative," said Bruce Shelley, a senior professor of church history at the Denver Theological Seminary. "Churches are under enormous pressure to be consumer-oriented. Churches today feel the need to be appealing rather than demanding."

But the Bible teaches first and last that God is a holy God, that sin and sinners cannot stand in the burning holiness of His flaming presence, and that our sins have separated us from His love.

And the Bible further teaches that it is the shedding of blood, the sacrificing of an innocent victim, that propitiates (appeases) God's wrath, satisfies the demands of God's holiness, and draws us again into His glorious presence.

The Bible says, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins." And so, every year on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest of Israel would enter the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle in the wilderness bringing with him the blood of an innocent lamb, sprinkling it on the mercy seat, to atone for the sins of the people.

Now, with all that in mind, I want to show you one of the most remarkable things in all the Bible, in the book of Hebrews, chapters 8 and 9:

The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 and who serves in the sanctuary, the true Tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.

3 Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to

offer. 4 If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. 5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the Tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain...."

Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. 2 A Tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. 3 Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, 4 which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. 5 Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. a But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

6 When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. 7 But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. 8 The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first Tabernacle was still standing. 9 This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. 10 They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

11 When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect Tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. 12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, b so that we may serve the living God!

15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant....

23 It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. 25 Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. 26 Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

In other words, the earthly Tabernacle was merely a model, in some sense, of the heavenly Tabernacle, the dwelling place of God, the throne room of the Almighty. And when Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven, He entered the Heavenly Tabernacle and there, in the Holy of Holies, He presented His own blood—the blood of the Lamb—before God the Father, to appease the wrath of God, atone for the sins of His people, and provide you and me with forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life.

And the book of Hebrews says, "How, then, shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?"

What can wash away my sins?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can make me whole again?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Oh, precious is the flow that makes me white as snow.

No other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Exodus 27 CURTAINS AND COLORS

Rob Morgan

This morning I'd like to show you one of the great verses in the Old Testament about Jesus Christ. It is a profound verse, and it just

explodes with information about the greatest man who ever lived. It is as rich as John 3:16 or Romans 6:23. But if any of you have ever read through the book of Exodus, there's a good chance you've passed right over it without realizing its deep significance. Certainly in the past I've skipped completely over it and missed everything about it. So I'd like for us all to look at it together. It is found in Exodus 27, and it is verse 16: For the entrance to the courtyard, provide a curtain twenty cubits long, of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen—the work of an embroiderer—with four posts and four bases.

Have you ever come across such a wonderful Christological verse? No? You're confused? Well, let's back up and read the entire paragraph, and then as we examine this paragraph, I think all will become clear. Since this is a rather difficult passage with measurements we need to convert, I'm going to read today from the New Living Translation:

9 "Make a courtyard for the Tabernacle, enclosed with curtains made from fine linen. On the south side the curtains will stretch for 150 feet. 10 They will be held up by twenty bronze posts that fit into twenty bronze bases. The curtains will be held up with silver hooks attached to the silver rods that are attached to the posts. 11 It will be the same on the north side of the courtyard—150 feet of curtains held up by twenty posts fitted into bronze bases, with silver hooks and rods. 12 The curtains on the west end of the courtyard will be 75 feet long, supported by ten posts set into ten bases. 13 The east end will also be 75 feet long. 14 The courtyard entrance will be on the east end, flanked by two curtains. The curtain on the right side will be 22½ feet long, supported by three posts set into three bases. 15 The curtain on the left side will also be 22½ feet long, supported by three posts set into three bases.

16 "For the entrance to the courtyard, make a curtain that is 30 feet long. Fashion it from fine linen, and decorate it with beautiful embroidery in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. It will be attached to four posts that fit into four bases. – Exodus 27:9-16 (New Living Translation).

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This is our fourth installment in our series of studies on God's Tent—the Tabernacle in the wilderness. The Bible devotes a total of fifty chapters to this subject, so we know it must have great significance. But what is the significance? What is the meaning of the Tabernacle? The book of Hebrews tells us that the Old Testament Tabernacle is a type, pattern, symbol, foreshadowing of New Testament truth. And we have already learned in our studies that the Old Testament Tabernacle is primarily a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and of the process through which He would atone for sin and reconcile us to God. John 1:14 says: And the Word (logos) became flesh and dwelt (skhnow - lived in a tent, tabernacled) among us, and we behold His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Zondervan Pictorial Biblical Encyclopedia puts it this way: "The Tabernacle may rightly be considered, with its emphasis on the fact of God's dwelling with man, as the main foreshadowing in the Old Testament of the doctrine of the Incarnation."

That is, the primary Old Testament type of Christ. Fourteen hundred years before Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, God designed a remarkable type, illustration, model, picture, foreshadowing of the Messiah in the Tabernacle in the wilderness. And the Tabernacle and its subsequent temple is the primary Old Testament visualization of Christ Jesus. Now, in our passage today we have several introductory elements of this Tabernacle. There are five things here to consider.

The Courtyard – Verse 9

First, the courtyard. Verse 9 says: "Make a courtyard for the Tabernacle.... The Tabernacle proper—the tent—was surrounded by a courtyard which was surrounded on all four sides by a tall fence made of heavy white linen curtains. The courtyard was rectangular in shape, measuring 150 feet long by 75 feet wide. Inside that courtyard were three things—the altar of bronze, a large laver or basin, and a tent, the Tabernacle itself.

This courtyard represented the worshipper's approach to God. The Psalmist said:

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty!

My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD;

my heart and my flesh cry out

for the living God.

Even the sparrow has found a home,

and the swallow a nest for herself,

where she may have her young—

a place near your altar...

A day in Your courts is better than a thousand... (from Psalm 84).

The Curtains – Ex 27:9-13

Second, notice the curtains that enclosed the courtyard from the surrounding desert and that separated it from the tents of the Israelites. The instructions in Exodus 25 go on to say: Make a courtyard for the Tabernacle, enclosed with curtains made from fine linen. On the south side the curtains will stretch for 150 feet. They will be held up by twenty bronze posts that fit into twenty bronze bases. The curtains will be held up with silver hooks attached to the silver rods that are attached to the posts. It will be the same on the north side of the courtyard—150 feet of curtains held up by twenty posts fitted into bronze bases, with silver hooks and rods. The curtains on the west end of the courtyard will be 75 feet long, supported by ten posts set into ten bases. The east end will also be 75 feet long.

This curtain-fence was 7-1/2 or 8 feet tall, made of white linen. At the top of the curtains were silver hooks that attached to silver poles which were supported by brass posts placed every few feet. These brass posts were set into brass sockets positioned in the sand. These curtains surrounded the entire complex and separated it from the encamped multitudes of Israel.

What does white linen represent in the Bible? According to Revelation 19:7-8, it represents righteousness and holiness: “For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)”

You can see the picture very graphically. On the outside of the Tabernacle complex were hundreds of thousands of tents, hundreds of thousands of Israelites. Young and old. Good and bad. Wise and foolish. But all of them were outside, separated from the presence of God by high, white curtains representing the righteousness and holiness of God. These curtains were too high to see over, or to climb over, or to jump over. They were impenetrable. There were no loops or loopholes, no back entrances or side doors.

It represented the fact that the people were separated from their God by the righteous demands of His holiness and of His righteousness. In fact, the biblical word “holiness” means, in its root form, “separate” and “separate from” and “to be set apart.”

The concept of God’s holiness is critical to our thinking. When I was in school, I used a theology book by Louis Berkhof and this is what he said about God’s holiness: It does not seem proper to speak of one attribute of God as being more central and fundamental than another; but if this were permissible, the scriptural emphasis on the holiness of God would seem to justify its selection.

We don’t hear the angels in heaven singing, “Loving, Loving, Loving,” although God is loving. We don’t hear them singing, “Omnipotent, Omnipotent, Omnipotent!” although God is all powerful. They cry, “Holy, Holy, Holy!”

And the primary reason we do not take sin very seriously in our lives, the reason we are so easily compromised by this world, is because we have lost, in large measure, the true concept of our God being utterly and absolutely holy.

When we lower our understanding of God’s holiness, we lower our concern about sin. Our concern about sin in our lives and in our society will be in direct proportion to our understanding of God’s holiness.

It was when Isaiah the prophet got a glimpse of Almighty God in the heavenly temple with the seraphs surrounding him and crying, “Holy, Holy Holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory,” that he—Isaiah—fell on his face and cried, “Woe is me! I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.”

It had never dawned on Isaiah that his lips were unclean. But in the light of God’s holiness, he recognized previously overlooked sin in his life.

And the Bible teaches that God is altogether holy, and that sin cannot dwell in His presence, nor can sinners. We are separated from God, as it were, by the eight-foot high curtains of His white-hot holiness, and we cannot leap over the curtains, we cannot dig under the curtains, we cannot crawl through the curtains.

Psalm 11 says: “The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men; His eyes examine them.”

Now, this brings us right to the heart of the human dilemma. If we are made to know and to love God, if He has placed eternity in our hearts, but if He is altogether holy and righteous, and if we are separated from Him, on the outside, blocked off by the high and holy curtains of His blindingly white righteousness, what do we do?

The Courtyard Entrance – Verse 16

This brings us to the verse I read at the beginning of the message, to this great verse about Jesus Christ, to verse 16. There is a

gate, an entrance, a door: "For the entrance to the courtyard, make a curtain that is 30 feet long. Fashion it from fine linen, and decorate it with beautiful embroidery in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn...."

How do we get into the Tabernacle? How do we find a way through the demands of His holiness? How can we approach Him? There is a door, facing east, and it is wide—30 feet wide. And it is the only way to proceed into God's presence. There is no other entrance. Jesus Christ said in John 10: "I am the door. I am the gate." He said in John 14: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

In his great sermon in Acts 4, Peter said: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

This is a vitally important verse for us today, because of the tenor of the times in which we are living. Most people today refute this area of Christian theology. They reject the exclusive claims of Christ as being the one and only pathway to God. One man told me recently on an airplane, "I believe there are many roads to God, just as there may be many roads to the top of a mountain. Some take one road, and some another. Only an ignorant or an arrogant person would claim that their road was the only one."

But Jesus said in John 8:24: I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.

1 Corinthians 3:11 says: For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. There is no other foundation for a holy or happy life. No other basis for an abundant or eternal life. Only Christ.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 says: For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men... How many mediators are there? How many who can forgive our sin and reconcile us to God? There is one—Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 2:3 says: How shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?

The whole message of the Gospel is that we have sinned against God and we are separated from Him by our sinfulness and by His holiness. But God himself, our Creator, so loved us that He gave His one and only Son to die in our stead. If there had been any other way of redeeming the human race, do you think Christ would have gone to the cross? He Himself prayed, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me." But it wasn't possible, for there was no other way. And that's why Peter said to the very sincere religious practitioners of his day: Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

There is one gate, and that is Christ.

The Colors – Verse 16

But there is something else here in verse 16. Notice the colors. The curtains around the courtyard are white linen, but the gate is made of linen, dyed in beautiful colors. "For the entrance to the courtyard, make a curtain that is 30 feet long. Fashion it from fine linen, and decorate it with beautiful embroidery in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn.

Blue, purple, and scarlet. As you read through the descriptions of the tabernacle in the book of Exodus, you bump into these three colors again and again. You might remember several months ago, I preached two sermons on the garments of the High Priest, and His priestly raiment was of the same colors.

In my library I have a collection of books about the Tabernacle. Without exception, each of these books say that the Tabernacle is an architectural rendition of the Lord Jesus Christ, that every element in this heavenly tent represents some truth about our Lord. And with equal unanimity, they stress the significance and importance of these colors that cover the Tabernacle and which make up the ephod of the High Priest.

The blue stands for our Lord's heavenly origin. Blue is the color of the sky, and on clear days when we look heavenward, we see an ocean of blue.

In the human sense, our Lord was born in Bethlehem like any child, but as it relates to His divine nature, He has always existed in heaven. He came down from heaven to dwell among men. John the Baptist called Him, "The One who comes down from heaven." Jesus Himself said the same on many occasions. To Nicodemus, during their famous nocturnal meeting in John 3, Jesus said: "No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

On another occasion, He said: "I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me." Jesus told His Jewish critics: "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world." Our Savior is of heavenly

origin.

The second color is purple, the universal color of royalty. In 331 B. C., Alexander the Great found 190-year-old purple robes when he conquered Susa, the ancient Persian capital. They were in the royal treasury as part of the wardrobe of the kings. In Roman and Byzantine history, this was the color worn by emperors. There have been periods in human history when people were executed for wearing the color purple; it was considered treasonous.

Why was this a color reserved for kings? Because only kings could afford it. Purple dye was extremely rare in the ancient world because it was produced by harvesting tiny bits of mucus from various sea mollusks! The city of Tyre was famous for the production of purple fabric, and estimates are that it took 8,500 shellfish to produce 1 gram of the dye. One account I read said, "In processing the dye, workers had to crack the shell and dig out a vein located near the shellfish head with a small pointed utensil. The mucus-like contents of the veins were then mixed together and spread on silk or linen. The saturated fabric was then placed in the sun, where the colors changed from light green to blue to purplish red."

Demand for this purple dye reached such proportions that certain species of Mediterranean shellfish became almost extinct in the ancient world. No wonder it was the color of royalty.

The Pharaohs highly valued this purple yarn, and when the Israelites left they plundered the Egyptians, taking not only their silver and gold, but their precious yarns and fabrics. The purple in the robe of the High Priest was rare and beautiful and it represented the royalty of the Messiah.

When the Magi came to Bethlehem looking for the Christchild, they asked, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?"

When they crucified Jesus, over His head hung the words: "King of the Jews."

The Bible says, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Timothy 1:17).

And the book of Revelation tells us that when Jesus comes again, He will have this name written on His robes: "King of kings and Lord of lords!"

The third color is scarlet. That represents the blood of Christ. The High Priest, by the very definition of his role, dealt in blood, in the sacrifices offered to atone for sin. Hebrews 4:11-12, picking up on that truth, says, "When Christ came as high priest ... He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption."

There is a fountain filled with blood

Drawn from Emmanuel's veins.

And sinners plunged beneath that flood

Lose all their guilty stains.

The Columns – Verse 16

Now, there is one other thing about Christ that we can learn from verse 16. There were four columns that supported this colorful gateway, and I believe they represent the four evangelists—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—who were chosen by God to give us the story of our Lord's life. Matthew tells us of His royalty—the King on the throne of David. Mark presents Him as the suffering servant. Luke presents Him as the perfect man. And John presents Him as the Son of God who became flesh and tabernacled among us.

I wonder if anyone here is loitering near the entrance of the Tabernacle this morning. I wonder if anyone here is curious about what God is like? Has anyone here been trying to peer over the curtains and get a glimpse of God? The gate is open, and the invitation is all yours to enter.

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,

And into His courts with praise.

Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting,

And His truth endures to all generations.

Exodus 29 THE ALTAR OF BRONZE

Rob Morgan

This week's cover story in Newsweek Magazine is entitled, "Why We Need Heaven." It has to do with the yearning in the human heart for eternal hope. The magazine said, "In the '00s, a decade known so far for its calamities, the question of what heaven is and who gets to go has taken on new urgency." According to the obligatory poll conducted for the article, seventy-six percent of Americans believe in heaven. And according to Newsweek, even those who don't believe in heaven wish that they did.

Well, there is certainly something wrong if this world is all there is. The Bible repeatedly speaks of eternity, of heaven, of hell, and of everlasting life. And the great theme of the Bible is the person and work of Jesus Christ, who conquered death and brings life and immortality to light through His Gospel.

All the way through the Bible, this is the theme. And in these recent weeks, we've been looking at how that theme is revealed in the biblical description of an ancient tent in the desert called the Tabernacle. After the children of Israel escaped their enslavement in Egypt, they paused in the Sinai at Mount Horeb, and there the Lord gave them the Ten Commandments and the law, and there He also gave them the plans for the building of a small, portable worship complex called the Tabernacle. Now, there are several surprising things about this Tabernacle. First, we're told that it was patterned or modeled after the real worship center in the highest heaven. Second, it is given extraordinary prominence in the Bible—50 chapters being devoted to it. Third, every element of this Tabernacle reveals something to us about the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is a piece of three-dimensional prophecy, a "type," a foreshadowing of Christ.

And that is why it is so interesting to us.

In our last message, we looked at the gate into the courtyard of this Tabernacle, and today I'd like to show you the first thing you would have seen upon entering the gate. The largest piece of furniture or equipment connected with the Tabernacle was the bronze altar, and it stood squarely in the way of anyone entering the Tabernacle complex.

I'd like to show you several passages in the Bible having to do with this altar. The first is in Exodus 27, which gives us the instructions Moses received for the building of this altar.

You shall make an altar of acacia wood, five cubits long (seven-and-a-half feet) and five cubits square (in other words, it was seven-and-a-half feet on each side)—the altar shall be square—and its height shall be three cubits (four and a half feet).

You shall make its horns on its four corners. (In other words, at each top corner, there was a little horn-shaped projection): its horns were to be one piece with it. And you shall overlay it with bronze.

Also you shall make its pans to receive its ashes, and its shovels and its basins and its forks and its firepots; you shall make all its utensils of bronze. You shall make a grate for it, a network of bronze... as it was shown you on the mountain, so shall they make it.

Now, the purpose of this altar is indicated two chapters over. Look at Exodus 29:38ff:

Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs of the first year, day by day continually. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight... This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet you to speak with you. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the Tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. So I will consecrate the Tabernacle of meeting and the altar... I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God.

Notice especially the all-important phrase in verse 43: There will I meet with the children of Israel.

In Exodus 38, the altar was constructed exactly as stipulated, and in Exodus 40, it was put into divine service. Now, what is the meaning of all this? It is referred to seventy-seven times in the Bible. What, then, does it represent? Well, this piece Tabernacle furnishing is not hard to interpret. The meaning is as clear as any type in the Old Testament can be. It represents that reality that George Bennard later put this way in his old Gospel hymn:

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,

The emblem of suffering and shame;

And I love that old cross where the dearest and best

For a world of lost sinners was slain.

The bronze altar represents the cross of Jesus Christ, even as the Lamb offered thereon represented the Lord Jesus Himself. We see this in three ways.

The Place of the Altar

First, notice the meaning of the altar. It was placed squarely in the forefront of the courtyard. As soon as the worshipper entered the gate, there he encountered the altar. He could go no further until he had passed by the altar.

I read about a church in Europe that is designed so that the handles on the doors are shaped in the form of a cross. To enter the church, you have to grasp the cross. That is brilliant symbolism, brilliant architecture, because that is just what the Bible teaches.

Galatians 6:14 says: "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

The Bible says: "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross."

Hebrews 12 says: "Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross."

Our Lord Jesus Christ was bound to the cross in the same way the Old Testament lambs were bound to the altar. He was slain on the cross the way the Old Testament lambs were slain on the altar. His blood was shed on the cross just as the Old Testament lambs shed their blood on the altar.

And the book of Hebrews emphasizes this in chapters 8, 9, and 10. Let me show you some selected verses from these chapters:

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

...But now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.

...For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,

But a body You have prepared for Me.

In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin

You had no pleasure.

Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—

In the volume of the book it is written of Me—

To do Your will, O God.' "

This is the first thing we come to in theology. This is the first thing we come to in doctrine. This is the very core of the Scriptures: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...

Several years ago, my family had the opportunity of entertaining in our home a delightful woman named, Rosemaria Von Trapp, one of the famous "Sound of Music" children. During the course of the evening, I asked her about her parents, Captain Georg and Maria Von Trapp, who fled Nazi-occupied Austria because they refused to cooperate with the Nazis. She replied, "Only yesterday I talked to high-school students—sophomores—who were doing research papers on the Holocaust of Hitler in Germany. They wanted me to talk about the Nazis. I told them that Hitler gave us a symbol of a cross with hooks on it. But our Christian faith gives us a symbol of a cross that brings freedom and resurrection. The world, you know, offers us a glossy cross with hooks in it. My father and mother had to make a choice. They chose the cross of Christ."

The world does offer many substitute crosses—many ways to alleviate guilt, many ways to find fulfillment, many ways to fill up the spiritual void in our hearts. But all the world's crosses have hooks in them. Only the cross of Jesus Christ works deeply in our lives to achieve genuine forgiveness, fulfillment, and eternal life.

"There will I meet you," says the Almighty Lord.

The Materials of the Altar

Second, notice the materials out of which the altar was made: It was constructed of acacia wood. The wood of the altar represents the wood of the cross. Jesus was crucified—executed—on a rough piece of timber that had been chopped down on a nearby hillside.

But, of course, this wood altar would have been consumed by the fire that constantly smoldered beneath it had it not been overlaid with bronze.

Some translations say "brass" and others say "bronze." We aren't sure the exact nature of this material. In those days they had no knowledge of brass, which is a mixture of copper and zinc, but they did know about bronze, which is a mixture of copper and tin. At any rate, the wood was completely covered by a fire-resistant metal, most likely bronze.

And bronze in the Bible is a symbol of judgement. Look at Numbers 21:

Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

In Deuteronomy 28, Moses warned the children of Israel that if they sinned against the Lord, the heavens would become bronze and not give their rains.

We're told in Revelation 1 that the reigning, ruling Christ in the heavens has feet that are, as it were, bronze.

The cross of our Lord was a cross of wood on which He bore the judgment of God for our sins.

The Horns of the Altar

Finally, notice that this altar had four horns fabricated into the four corners. Fifteen times in the Bible we find the phrase, "The horns of the altar." It was to these four projections that the ropes were tied which bound the sacrificial animal. Psalm 118:27 says: "Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar." Christ was bound to the altar of the cross, not by the nails, but by cords of love.

But these horns also had another very interesting purpose. If someone were in trouble, if he were being pursued by an enemy, if he were facing danger or distress, he could run to the tabernacle and take hold of the horns of this altar, and he would find there a place of safety and refuge, for the altar was holy.

In 1 Kings 1, David's son, Adonijah, who wanted to be king knew that his life was in great danger, for Solomon had been anointed king instead. In great haste and in great fear, he fled to the Tabernacle and he clasped the horns of the altar. And there he found safety.

In research that I'm doing on a book of hymn stories, I came across the life of a man named George Bernard.

George Bennard was born in Youngstown, Ohio, shortly after the end of the Civil War. His father, a coal miner, moved the family to Iowa, and there George came to Christ through the ministry of the Salvation Army. He felt impressed to train for the ministry, but his plans were disrupted when his father's death left him responsible for his mother and sisters. He was sixteen years old. Instead of theological school, he worked by day and devoted his spare time to books.

Eventually George's obligations lessened, and he was able to move to Chicago, marry, and begin in ministry with the Salvation Army. Later he was ordained by the Methodist Episcopal church and became a traveling evangelist.

On one occasion, after a difficult season of ministry, George realized he needed to better understand the power of the cross of Christ. He later said, "I was praying for a full understanding of the cross... I read and studied and prayed.... The Christ of the Cross became more than a symbol... It was like seeing John 3:16 leave the printed page, take form, and act out the meaning of redemption. While watching this scene with my mind's eye, the theme of the song came to me."

It took several months for the words to formulate in his mind. As he preached through the Midwest, George would carry the words with him, working on them, polishing them, and sometimes singing them in his meetings. It always stuck a chord with his audiences.

At last, his hymn finished, George went to the home of his friends, Rev. and Mrs. L. O. Boswick, and sang it for them. After the last note, he looked at them and asked, "Will it do?"

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,

The emblem of suffering and shame;

And I love that old cross where the dearest and best

For a world of lost sinners was slain.

One night this week, as I studied the subject of the altar and as I studied about the cross and as I thought of this old hymn, it all became very real to me. When the storms of life are raging, when we are afraid and perplexed, there is an ocean of safety and security in clinging to the old rugged cross. In my mind's eye, I saw myself clinging to that old rugged cross the way a frightened man would run to the Tabernacle and cling to the horns of the altar.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,

Till my trophies at last I lay down;

I will cling to the old rugged cross,

And exchange it some day for a crown.

Today I invite you to come to that same old rugged cross where the dearest and best for a world of lost sinners was slain.

Exodus 30:17-21 THE BRONZE LAVER

Rob Morgan

As we continue our studies of the Tabernacle, we're now coming to the middle of the courtyard and there we find the laver as described in Exodus 30:17-21:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water in it. Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it. Whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister by presenting an offering made to the Lord by fire, they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come.

When you approached the wilderness Tabernacle, the first thing you saw were the tall, forbidding curtains of white linen, representing the holiness of God. Those curtains sealed off God's presence and separated the Israelites from fellowship with Him. But there was a gate—one very colorful gate on the eastern end of the Tabernacle. That gate represented the fact that Christ was our only way into God's presence. Entering the gate, you ran right into the altar, representing the cross of Christ upon which the Lamb of God was sacrificed. Just beyond the cross was this large basin called the laver. The exact shape and dimensions of the laver are not given, so we don't have a precise idea as to exactly what it looked like or how large it was. But it apparently was a sort of basin, perhaps on a pedestal, that held a large amount of water. The priests, having offered the sacrifice upon the altar, would stop at the laver to wash their hands and feet before approaching the actual tent and entering the Holy Place.

I've actually seen this done in a different context. Today on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the Islamic Shrine the Dome of the Rock sits where the ancient temple used to be. In front of the Dome of the Rock, there is a sort of water fountain with little seats all around it. The Muslims sit there, remove their sandals or shoes, and wash their feet before entering their holy shrine.

In other context, most of us have done this same sort of thing at the beach. We'll come in from the ocean with our feet caked with

sand. At the entrance to the hotel or condominium area, there is often a cold-water shower where we can rinse off, and sometimes there's a little foot shower just for the purpose of washing the sand off our feet.

The Israelites lived in a very sandy and dusty area, and before entering the presence of God in the Holy place, the priests were commanded to wash their feet.

Now, if everything about the Tabernacle tells us something about Jesus Christ, what does this tell us? It tells us three things.

The Symbol Represents the Sanctifier

First, the symbol represents the Sanctifier. Christ is not only our Sacrifice as we saw at the altar; He is our Sanctifier, as we see at the laver. What does that mean? From time to time, someone says to me, "I don't go to church because the church is full of hypocrites." I've heard that excuse so many times through the years that I've naturally thought a lot about that. I've finally formulated my response. When someone complains about hypocrites in the church, I reply: "You're absolutely right. In fact, everybody in this church is a hypocrite, including the pastor. We're all a bunch of hypocrites. None of us live as we should. None of us live as we profess. Our beliefs are better and higher than our behavior. We've been pardoned, but we aren't yet perfect. We're all works in progress. We're all under construction. And the most we can say is that we are growing every day to be more and more like Christ, but none of us has arrived there yet."

This process of growth, this process of Christlikeness by which God is perfecting us and maturing us is the process of sanctification—and Christ Himself is the sanctifier. One of the Lord's majestic names is given in Leviticus 20:7-8: Jehovah M'Kaddesh—the God who sanctifies. Now, this has come to be a very precious truth to me.

I am not responsible for sanctifying myself. I can't lift myself up and make myself better. I can't overcome sin in my life on my own. But I can cooperate with the One who is powerful enough to reverse the downward trends in my life. It is Christ, the one who saves me, who sanctifies me.

The Bible says, "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

The Psalmist said: "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me" (Psalm 138:8).

From time to time, someone comes to me with a behavior they want to change in their lives. Frequently someone says, "How can I quit smoking? I can't seem to kick the habit." Another person will complain about cussing. Another has a drug or alcohol addiction. Sometimes a husband or wife will come. When they married their spouse, they had no idea how immature he or she was. "How can I change them?" they ask.

The bad news is that not only can we not change another person, we can't even change ourselves. The good news is—that's Christ's responsibility. This is the basic philosophy behind the famous 12-step program. We are powerless to change ourselves, but a power greater than ourselves is available to us. Jehovah M'Kaddesh—our Jesus who is the Sanctifier.

This reminds me of two passages in John's Gospel.

In John 19:34, we're told that when our Lord Jesus died on the cross, that a Roman soldier, to ensure that He was indeed dead, reached up with a spear and pierced His side. From it there flowed both blood and water.

And then in John 13, we have the famous story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. In the Middle Eastern world, people's feet became dirty and dusty whenever they went outside. They didn't have shoes and socks as we do, and they didn't have pavement and blacktop as we do. They walked down dirty, dusty roads in the country, and down dirty, dusty streets in the city. So it was customary, whenever you entered a home, to rinse off your feet. And since they didn't have running water, it was done with water in a basin or a laver. In wealthier homes, a servant was assigned this task.

In the Upper Room on the night He was betrayed, Jesus, seeing no servant, assumed this chore Himself. Rising from the table, He girded Himself with a towel and poured water into a basin. That basin in John 13 was a little miniature version of the basin in Exodus 38. It served exactly the same purpose, and it held exactly the same meaning. The basin that Jesus had in John 13 was a mini-laver. It was a scaled-down version of the one that stood only a few blocks away in the courtyard of Herod's temple, based on the prior laver in the Tabernacle.

And so Jesus began to wash the disciples' feet, cleansing their feet from the dust that had accumulated during the day. But when He got to Peter, Peter resisted Him, saying, "Lord, I can never allow you to wash my feet." Jesus replied, "If I don't wash your feet, you have no part of me."

"Then, Lord," said Peter, "Not just my feet, but wash me completely." Jesus replied, "If you've already had a bath, you don't need to be washed completely. You only need your feet washed."

What was He saying? When we come to the cross of Jesus Christ, when we are saved, when we are redeemed, we are totally bathed. We are washed in the blood of Christ. We are cleansed from all sin—past, present, and future. We are forgiven. Our guilt is gone. We are reconciled to God and we become His child. But day by day the pollution of the world sullies our feet. We accumulate dust. We commit these sins that damage our souls. And day by day, the Lord, as it were, washes our feet. He gives us daily cleansing. He gives us daily forgiveness. Not forgiveness in an eternal sense, but forgiveness in a daily sense.

The last time I spoke on this—a Sunday night several months ago—I had an interesting response. We had a young man, a visitor, who stood up during my sermon, interrupted me, and debated with me on this issue. His point was that we should never ask God for forgiveness after we've been saved, because when He forgives us, all of our sins—past, present, and future—they are all forgiven. And it is an expression of unbelief to ask God to forgive that which He has already forgiven.

Well, the young man had a good point. Our sins are eternally forgiven. My past sins are eternally forgiven. The sins I commit today are eternally forgiven. The sins I'll commit tomorrow are eternally forgiven. I never worry about dying in my sins and going to hell. The power of the blood of Christ is all-inclusive in my life. If I were to lose my temper after this sermon and suffer a fatal attack, I would still go to heaven. There is no sin which is excluded by His blood, and I live a perpetually forgiven life.

On the hand, there is a sense in which I need daily cleansing. My body has been bathed, but my hands and feet still get dusty. Jesus taught us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." 1 John 1:9 is the Bible's classic verse on this subject. Writing to Christians, the old apostle John said, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and will cleanse us from all unrighteousness." So the basin represents the daily cleansing we need from the dust of life that sullies our hands and feet.

The Water Represents the Word

So my first point today is that Jesus saves us by blood and sanctifies us by water. He is the Sanctifier, and this is the order, the arrangement of the furnishings of the Tabernacle. We enter through the gate, then, on our way into communion with God, we go first to the altar where the blood is applied, then to the basin where the water is applied.

What does the water represent? The water represents the Word of God. Look at Ephesians 5. In this passage, Paul is telling husbands that they should love their wives as Christ loves His bride, the church. Verse 25ff says: Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word.

In what sense does the Word of God cleanse us? In two ways.

First, as we confess our sins to the Lord, it is the Word of God that assures us of the forgiveness which has been purchased for us by the blood of Christ.

You might remember a little story I've used in the past to illustrate this. Corrie ten Boom, the Dutch Christian, shared it. There was a little girl who broke her mother's precious demitasse cup. Coming to her mother, she confessed what she had done. She felt so badly about it, that she cried and asked her mother to forgive her. Her mother did so, then hugged her and held her tightly before sweeping up the pieces and throwing them in the trash basket. But the little girl still felt badly, and after awhile she went to the trash basket and got the broken pieces back out again. Bringing them to her mother, she started crying all over again, and confessing what she had done. This time her mother told her, "Didn't I say that you were forgiven? Don't you believe me? Now, go, throw those pieces in the trash basket and leave them there."

How often we keep going to that trash basket and getting out the broken pieces. What we need to do is to go to the Scriptures and claim the assurances contained therein about the sufficiency of the blood of Christ. So the word cleanses us in that it conveys to us everything we need to know to claim the assurance of God's great forgiveness, regardless of our sins.

Second, the Word cleanses us in that it is the primary way in which the Lord makes our daily lives clean and whole. Evangelist D. L. Moody used to say, "Sin will keep you from the Bible, or the Bible will keep you from sin." The Word of God is the primary instrument by which God sanctifies us. Several years ago, I was speaking at a Southern Baptist event in Georgia. In my message, I quoted Proverbs 29:11: A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.

Afterward a big, burly man came up to me with his little wife beside him. He said, "You really hit me over the head with that verse. I have had problems with my temper, but I always justified shouting at my wife by telling her that it was good for me to express my feelings, that we should express our feelings openly in our marriage and get things off our chest. Now I realize that shouting and screaming at my wife is a mark of a fool, and I just wanted you to know how that verse opened my eyes tonight."

Recently in a biography, I read about a Christian, a missionary, who was deeply hurt by another man who had criticized his wife. When it happened, he was angry enough to kill the man, and for several years he harbored a secret bitterness. One day as he was

fasting and praying for revival, three words from a verse of Scripture suddenly came to his mind: Love your enemies.

The force with which those words came to him brought tears to his eyes, and he realized that in his anger he had never prayed for the other man to be saved. Down on his knees he wept and prayed and confessed his sin, and he prayed for this enemy. And suddenly the revival he was praying for began in him. He said, "When repentance washed the guilt away and the peace of forgiveness filled my soul, I knew an ecstasy of joy beyond description."

Over and over again, it is the Word of God as we hear it, as we read it, as the Holy Spirit brings it to mind—it is the Word of God that sanctifies us.

The Basin Represents the Bible

And that leads us me to my third observation. If the symbol represents the Sanctifier, and the Water represents the Word, what does the basin represent. It represents that which contains the water—the basin represents the Bible.

I'd like to show you the thing about the basin which is, to me, the most interesting. Look with me at Exodus 38:8. This verse tells us what the basin was made out of: "They made the bronze basin and its bronze stand from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting."

When the women left Egypt, they took with them Egyptian mirrors. Now, they weren't the glass mirrors as we use today. Those hadn't been invented yet. The history of mirrors begins with the still water of ponds. At the beginning of human history, that was the only way people had in knowing what they looked like. But soon they learned to take bronze or silver metals and polish them so as to give a reflection.

As the Lord prompted their hearts, the women of Israel gave up their bronze mirrors, and they were melted down, and out of them came the bronze laver. They forsook that which represented physical beauty for the sake of that which represented spiritual beauty. Peter touched on this same issue in 1 Peter 3 when he told women (and men, for that matter) not to be overly concerned about the outward appearance, but to focus on making the heart and soul beautiful, for outward beauty fades with age, but inner beauty increases with age.

But now look at James 1:22f: Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do it is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

When Katrina and I were first married, I would wonder sometimes why she was so long in the bathroom. I would sometimes call through the door, "What's taking you so long?" She would reply, "I'm having my toilette." I also discovered that she was particularly pleased whenever I purchased for her a little bottle of Eau de Toilette. But I thought to myself, "My goodness, I hope no one every finds out I'm spending \$50 for a bottle of toilet water.

But one day I looked it up the word toilette the dictionary I found something very interesting. Our common, rather vulgar, wordtoilet, which we use in the sense of commode, comes from a French word for the little towel that men used to put over their shoulder when they shaved. That little shaving cloth was called a toilette. And it came to mean the process of washing your face, shaving, or putting on your makeup, or whatever you needed to do to be presentable in the morning.

James is telling us here that we need to have a daily, spiritual toilette. We need to go to the Word of God each day and use it like a mirror. As we read it, it shows us if we have any smudges, any dirt, any dust, any blemishes. And if we're wise, having seen the problem in the mirror of the word, we confess our sins and correct our behavior or our attitude.

But who is it that gives us the power to change? Who is it that applies the water of the Word? Who is it that holds up the mirror of the Bible? It is the Lord Jesus Christ who sanctifies us. If you're battling something today—maybe an addiction, maybe an unhealthy attitude, maybe an angry spirit, maybe a bad habit—you can't change yourself, but Christ can change you by the washing of the water of the Word.

I would recommend you search the Scriptures for those verses that speak directly to your situation. Commit them to memory. Claim them, and let the power of Jesus Christ give you overcoming victory.

For "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Corinthians10:13).

He is Jehovah M'Kaddesh, the God who sanctifies. He is Jesus, the one who has begun a good work in us, and who will carry it on to completion.

Exodus 30:1-9, 37:10-16 INSIDE THE TABERNACLE CHRIST: OUR SUFFICIENCY

Rob Morgan

We're living in an age in which preachers in American pulpits are trying harder than ever to be relevant to the needs of our people and of our society, and that includes me. We want our sermons to help people where they live. This is a frantic age, and we need to bring the Bible to bear upon the things we're facing. As a result, there are a lot of "How-to" sermons, topical sermons, issue-oriented sermons. There's nothing wrong with that, but there's always the danger of getting away from truly biblical, text-driven messages.

Someone dropping in on one of our services during this summertime period and seeing the title of our current series of sermons might ask, "What in the world is relevant about the archaic descriptions of the ancient tent—the Tabernacle—which the Jews erected in the Sinai desert? Why preach a series of sermons on that?"

But past generations were fascinated by the lessons to be discovered in this subject. As I've continued to personally study the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, I've found many old books devoted to this theme. One of them was by A. B. Simpson, an American Presbyterian minister and the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. This is what he wrote:

This is the grandest of all the Old Testament types of Christ. It is all one great object lesson of spiritual truth. In its wonderful furniture, priesthood, and worship, we see with a vividness that we find nowhere else, the glory and grace of Jesus, and the privileges of His redeemed people.

In other words, the Tabernacle is relevant because it is all about Jesus, and Jesus is always relevant.

In our study of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, here's what we've learned about Christ so far. As we approach the Tabernacle, we see the gateway, the door, which speaks of Christ as our Salvation. Next we come to the altar, which speaks of Christ as our Sacrifice. Then, as we saw last week, we studied the laver or the bronze basin, which speaks of Christ as our Sanctifier. Now, today, let's walk from the laver to the Tabernacle itself—the actual tent—and let's enter the first of its two rooms, the Holy Place. Here we find the Christ is our Sufficiency.

In this first room there were three items: As you entered on the right, you saw a small table, the size of a coffee table, piled high with freshly baked bread. On the left was the great menorah, the seven branched candle stick. And in the center of the room on the side opposite the entrance was a small altar where incense was burning.

The Golden Candlestick

The room would have been pitch black except that the light from the seven-branched candlestick—the candelabra, the menorah—reflected off the acacia wood walls that were overlaid with pure gold. So a soft golden glow filled the room, symbolizing the dazzling glory of the presence of the Lord Jesus. Were it not for this candlestick, the room would have been pitch black. There were multiple layers of heavy fabrics and skins covering the Tabernacle, and no light from the outside could enter. This provided the only light, and it represents Jesus Christ who alone is the light of the world.

This is a great theme in John's Gospel, where the word "light" appears 24 times. I'd like for you to turn over to the Gospel of John, and let's trace some of the occurrences of this word:

John 1:4ff: In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it... There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

John 3:19ff: This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light, because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come to the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light....

John 8:12: When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 9:5: While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

John 11:35-36: Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have

it, so that you may become sons of light.

We can even go to the book of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, written about 400 years before Christ was born, and find this theme. In Malachi 4—the last chapter of the Old Testament—the ancient prophet avows that the Messiah's coming will be like the sun rising in the morning, with healing in its rays.

It takes eight minutes and fifteen seconds for a particle of light to travel through space from the sun to the earth. That means that if at this moment the sun would suddenly burn out like a light bulb when the filament blows, we would have just about eight minutes of life left on this earth. Then suddenly the world would be plunged into darkness. I suppose our power stations would work for a few minutes, and I suppose we could see the distant twinkling stars. But for the most part, this planet would be plunged into pitch blackness and we would all be groping around like blind men.

And then, of course, the deadly blasts of cold air would blanket the planet, and temperatures would plunge into a deep freeze. The weather systems would all collapse, and without the sun's gravitational pull, our planet would wobble out of its circuit and float away into the blackness of the void.

That's what a person's life is like without Jesus Christ! The Son of God is to the human soul what the sun above is to planet Earth. He provides warmth and light, and our lives are to revolve around Him in a ceaseless orbit of faith and obedience. Without Him, we grope in the darkness, looking for hope, but all is dark and cold, and our lives grow wobbly and gradually lose altitude until they're lost in the blackness of eternity.

The Psalmist said, "The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life—of whom shall I be afraid" (Psalm 27:1).

The Table of Shewbread

Across the room, against the right wall, was the table of shewbread. It is described in Exodus 37:10-16:

10 He made the table of acacia wood; two cubits was its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height. 11 And he overlaid it with pure gold, and made a molding of gold all around it. 12 Also he made a frame of a handbreadth all around it, and made a molding of gold for the frame all around it. 13 And he cast for it four rings of gold, and put the rings on the four corners that were at its four legs. 14 The rings were close to the frame, as holders for the poles to bear the table. 15 And he made the poles of acacia wood to bear the table, and overlaid them with gold. 16 He made of pure gold the utensils which were on the table: its dishes, its cups, its bowls, and its pitchers for pouring.

This, of course, represents Jesus as the Bread of Life, which is another theme that we find highlighted in the Gospel of John. The word "bread" also occurs 24 times in John's Gospel, exactly the same as the word "light." For example, in John 6:35, Jesus said: "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

He was telling us that in the middle of our bodies we have a stomach. When it's empty, it sends signals to our brain that it needs some input, it needs some fuel, some food. And if it doesn't get the right kind of fuel, we become unhealthy. And if it doesn't get any kind of food or fuel at all, we die.

Our souls are made along the same pattern. We have an empty spot in the middle of us. The psychologist Viktor Frankl called this an "existential vacuum."

I was interested to read in the newspapers last year that the great great grandson of Charles Darwin paid a visit to Dayton, Tennessee, where the famous Scopes Monkey Trial was held. USA Today reported that he described himself as a defiant atheist "overwhelmed with an inexplicable sense of spiritual emptiness."

It's remarkable how empty people are today. So what do they do? They devour Styrofoam all the time. The Lord offers them the bread of life, but they keep on eating Styrofoam. They stuff themselves full with all kinds of plastic, unsatisfying things, trying to fill up that loneliness, that void, that emptiness.

But Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

The Altar of Incense

The third item in the Holy Place was the altar of incense, which is described in Exodus 30:

"Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense. 2 It is to be square, a cubit long and a cubit wide, and two cubits high a—its horns of one piece with it. 3 Overlay the top and all the sides and the horns with pure gold, and make a gold molding around it. 4 Make two gold rings for the altar below the molding—two on opposite sides—to hold the poles used to carry it. 5 Make the poles of

acacia wood and overlay them with gold. 6 Put the altar in front of the curtain that is before the ark of the Testimony—before the atonement cover that is over the Testimony—where I will meet with you.

7 “Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. 8 He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the LORD for the generations to come. 9 Do not offer on this altar any other incense or any burnt offering or grain offering, and do not pour a drink offering on it.

It’s easy to interpret the Christological meaning of this, because the Bible itself interprets it. Look at these verses:

- Psalm 141:2: May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.
- Revelation 5:8: ...the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.
- Revelation 8:3: Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God....

When the priest entered the Holy Place and burned incense on the golden altar, it was emblematic of the prayers he was offering for the people, and it was emblematic of the prayers of all the people which rose to God like a cloud of incense.

This speaks to us of the intercessory ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is not only the light of the world and the bread of life, He is the intercessor for the saints. He pleads for us before the throne. He prays for us.

In what way?

In two ways. First, He defends us when Satan accuses us before the Father and when our sins condemn us before the Throne. We have a vivid description of this in Zechariah 3:

Then he showed me Joshua a the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan b standing at his right side to accuse him. 2 The LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?”

3 Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. 4 The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.” Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you.”

5 Then I said, “Put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by.

Compare this with Romans 8:34: Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

And 1 John 2:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for b the sins of the whole world.

Jesus continually stands between us and the judicial wrath of God, and when the devil accuses us before the Father or when our sins condemn us, He is our advocate, just as the old hymn that says:

I have no other argument,

I have no other plea;

It is enough that Jesus died,

And that He died for me.

But, second, just as the High Priest prayed for and pleaded for and interceded for the people of Israel, so the Lord prays for and pleads for and intercedes for you and me.

The book of Hebrews says:

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been

tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need...

Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them... Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

What do you suppose Jesus says to the Father when He prays for us? What requests do you think He makes on our behalf? Well, we get a mighty good idea when we read His great High Intercessory prayer in John 17. But, in essence, I think He knows all we are going through, and He prays down the great and perfect will of God into our lives.

Now, if you and I really believed this, what a difference it would make. If you knew when you awoke in the morning, that Jesus was busy in heaven, offering a special prayer to God the Father for you, wouldn't it make a difference in the confidence with which you started your day?

If you know when you plunged into your daily work that Jesus was praying for you, wouldn't it affect your attitude?

If you retired at night knowing that while you were sleeping, the dear Lord was interceding for you, wouldn't you rest better?

He ever lives to make intercession for the His people!

He is our sufficiency! The reason His grace is sufficient is that He is sufficient.

Under the shadow of His throne

Still may be dwell secure.

Sufficient is His arm alone,

And our defense is sure.

When we know Him as our Lord and Savior, we are abiding with Christ in a Holy Place, and we find Him to be for us the light of the world—our candelabra; the bread of life—our table of shewbread; and He is our altar of incense—our Intercessor, our Sufficiency.

Exodus 25 RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK: MEET THE CREW OF THE PERFECT STORM

Rob Morgan

There was a movie last year that I deliberately avoided because I knew I wouldn't like the ending. Based on a true story, it was called *The Perfect Storm*. It was about a group of fisherman caught in their boats off the coast of Gloucester, Massachusetts, during what was called "the most terrifying storm in recorded history." It was actually three storms rolled into one, with waves of 100 feet, the equivalent of a ten-story building.

In the biographies of great Christians of past eras, one often comes across accounts of the terror of storms at sea. If we had time, I could tell you how John Welsey and John Newton, two great Christians of the eighteenth century, were both brought to the Savior because of encountering life-threatening storms at sea.

In the Bible, we have similar stories about both Jonah and Paul, who were caught in terrible storms on the Mediterranean Sea, and of the disciples who suffered terror on the Sea of Galilee.

Even though none of us is likely to perish by drowning at sea during a storm—we aren't seafaring people—we can relate to the images, for all of us go through stormy weather. The other day I was listening to my Big Band station, and they were playing that old song, "Stormy Weather." The words say:

Stormy weather...

Me and my man ain't together,

Keeps raining all the time

We all go through stormy weather. I was reading this week about a man who had his annual physical, and the doctor pronounced him fit and in virtually perfect health. But a few days later, the doctor called back. "It's about your blood tests," the doctor said. "I have some concerns. Can you come in right away?" The news was that he had leukemia, and suddenly he felt he was in the perfect storm.

Very often people come to see me, struggling with multiple problems, any one of which would be difficult. As we see in the biblical story of Job, the devil often causes the storms to merge into one giant typhoon in an effort to sink us to the bottom of the sea.

What do wise sailors do when they encounter storms? In the terrible storm described in Acts 27, we read this in verse 29: Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight.

When your ship is being driven by merciless winds and you're in danger of crashing against the rocks, you have to anchor your vessel. You have to drop your anchor and hope that it catches to a solid rock. The same is true in life. There's an old Gospel song that says:

Though the angry surges roll,
On my tempest driven soul,
I am peaceful for I know,
Wildly though the winds may blow,
I've an anchor safe and sure,
That can evermore endure.

Review

But what does that really mean? How can we anchor our lives? That question brings us now to our ongoing study of the Tabernacle, God's Tent—the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. The last portion of the book of Exodus is devoted to describing the wondrous tent, and we have learned that it is the Old Testament's most complete foreshadowing of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The curtains and colors and components of this Tabernacle tell us all about the Lord Jesus.

Let's review very briefly. When you approached the Tabernacle, you saw the forbidding white curtains marking off the courtyard. They were made of white linen and were seven and a half feet tall, stretching 150 feet east and west, and 75 feet north and south. They represented the holiness of God which separates Him from us and us from Him. But there was a wide, multi-colored gate in the eastern end, representing Christ as our Salvation.

Entering through this one gate, you came to the altar, which represented Christ as our Sacrifice. Proceeding across the courtyard, you came to the laver, representing Christ as our Sanctifier. Then you entered the first room of the Tabernacle proper—the Holy Place—and that first room was lined with gold. Inside it were the golden candlestick, the table of shewbread, and the altar of incense—all speaking of Christ as our Sufficiency.

There was a veil forming a wall in this Tent, and behind the veil was the second room of the Tabernacle. This room, the Holy of Holies, was the most sacred spot on earth. Only the High Priest could enter this room, and He could do it only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. In this room there was one article, one furnishing—the Ark of the Covenant.

This Ark of the Covenant is described in Exodus 25:

Have them make a chest of acacia wood—two-and-a-half cubits long, a-cubit-and-a-half wide, and a cubit-and-a-half high. Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold molding around it. Cast four gold rings for it and fasten them to its four feet, with two rings on one side and two rings on the other. Then make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. Insert the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest to carry it. The poles are to remain in the rings of this ark; they are not to be removed. Then put in the ark the Testimony which I will give you.

Make an atonement cover of pure gold— two-and-a-half cubits long and a cubit-and-a-half wide. And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. Make one cherub on one end and the second cherub on the other; make the cherubim of one piece with the cover, at the two ends. The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the cover. Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark of the Testimony which I will give you. There above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.

What Did It Look Like?

Now, some people become confused when we talk about the Ark of the Covenant because the best known “Ark” in the Bible is “Noah’s Ark,” and so they think of a boat or a ship. But the word “Ark” comes from a Latin word meaning chest, a storage place for something valuable. There was a sense in which Noah’s Ark was a huge chest that protected Noah and his family from the waters of the flood. The Ark of the Covenant was, in comparison, a small chest. It was approximately four feet long and about 2 feet wide and 2 feet high.

It was made of acacia wood, which was available in the desert and was known for its great durability. In fact, it was so extremely durable that in the Greek Version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, the word is translated “incorruptible” or “non-decaying.” This wood was then overlaid with gold, and there are two theories as to how this was done. Some scholars believe that a layer of gold was applied directly to this wood, and others believe that there was a thin box of gold on both the inside and outside of the wood. In other words, there was a box of gold slightly larger than the wooden box, and the wood was slipped into this gold box, and then a slightly smaller gold box was slipped inside the wood, encasing it like Chinese stacking boxes.

It had a lid or a cover which was called the Atonement Cover or the Mercy Seat, that fit firmly into the top of the chest. And molded into that cover were the images of two angels—cherubim—their wings outstretched and facing each other.

Inside this chest there came to be placed three objects—Aaron’s staff, a golden jar of manna, and the tablets containing the Ten Commandments.

Where Is It Now?

Now, the most frequently asked question regarding the Ark of the Covenant is: What has become of it? The movie “Raiders of the Lost Ark” was based on the premise that it is still in existence somewhere, in some cave or cavern, waiting to be discovered. If so, it would become the great archaeological discovery of all of human history.

So, where is the Ark right now? Well, we know that during the days of Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Judges, and the kingly reigns of Saul and David, the Ark of the Covenant remained in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle. When King Solomon built the temple, which superseded the Tabernacle, it was moved into the Holy of Holies of the Temple. There it stayed for hundreds of years. But in the latter days of the kingdom of Judah, foreign invaders raided the Temple and removed many of its precious objects, although there is no specific mention of the ark being removed. Finally the temple itself was destroyed by fire during Babylonians siege of 587 B.C. The Ark was never seen again.

What happened to it? There are several possibilities.

Perhaps the most likely is that it was destroyed when the temple was burned down in 587 B.C.

However, there are some archaeologists who believe the priests hid the Ark of the Covenant somewhere in the caverns underneath the Temple Mount, and that it is there to this day. The Temple Institute in Jerusalem, which I have visited and which is dedicated to the restoration of the Temple of Solomon, is certain that the Ark is somewhere underneath the Temple Mount and will be discovered at just the right time.

There are also some ancient Jewish writings that suggest the ancient priests of Israel, when invasion seemed imminent, took the Ark across the Jordan River and hid it somewhere on Mount Nebo, which is now in the modern nation of Jordan.

There is also a tradition that the Ark of the Covenant is in Ethiopia.

And then, some people believe the Ark of the Covenant is in heaven, that God took it up into the Heavenly Temple. This is based on the fact that in the Book of Revelation, John the Apostle saw into heaven, and there was the Ark of the Covenant. But we have to remember that the furnishings of the earthly Tabernacle were modeled after the realities in heaven, and I think what John saw was the actual reality, of which the earthly ark was simply a copy.

So, of course, it comes down to this—we don’t know if the Ark of the Covenant still exists or if it was destroyed with the temple in 587 B.C. If it does exist, I agree with the rabbis at the Temple Institute that God will bring it to light at just the right to be included in the furnishings of the Third Temple.

But while we do not know the location of the Ark, we do know something of its significance.

What Does It Mean?

If the gate into the Temple courtyard represents Christ our Savior; if the altar represents Christ our Sacrifice; if the laver represents Christ our Sanctifier; if the Holy Place represents Christ our Sufficiency; then the Holy of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant represents Christ as our Sovereign, our King, our King of kings and Lord of lords.

There is a very telling little verse about the Ark of the Covenant I'd like to show you in 1 Chronicles 28. In this chapter, King David discusses his plans for building the projected Temple. Listen to the way he describes the Ark of the Covenant:

David summoned all the officials of Israel to assemble at Jerusalem: the officers over the tribes, the commanders of the divisions in the service of the king, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of all the property and livestock belonging to the king and his sons, together with the palace officials, the mighty men and all the brave warriors. King David rose to his feet and said: "Listen to me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it..."

Here David uses the phrase, "the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord," and he immediately describes it as "the footstool of our God." When I saw that verse, suddenly I understood the significance of the Ark of the Covenant. The earthly Tabernacle is modeled after the true Temple of the Lord in the highest heaven. In that highest heaven, God rules and reigns from the Heavenly Holy of Holies, the place of His almighty throne.

The earthly Tabernacle was a replica of that, and in the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant was, as it were, the earthly footstool of God's heavenly throne.

Now, with that in mind, let me show you some other verses:

Psalm 132:7ff: Let us go to His dwelling place (the Tabernacle/Temple); let us worship at His footstool—arise, O Lord, and come to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your might.

Psalm 80:1 says: Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock; you who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth.

That is a clear reference to the Ark of the Covenant. Remember that molded into the gold atonement cover were two cherubim, two protecting angels, representing the fact that God's heavenly throne is surrounded by angelic beings, their wings outstretched, praising and beautifying His enthroned glory.

Psalm 99:1 says: The Lord reigns, let the nations tremble; He sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake. Great is the Lord in Zion; He is exalted over all the nations. Let them praise Your great and awesome name—He is holy.

That's why I can say that while the gate represents Christ our Savior, and the altar Christ our Sacrifice, and the laver, Christ our Sanctifier, and the Holy Place Christ our Sufficiency, the Holy of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant represents Christ as our Sovereign.

And in the storms of life, what do we do? We take our anchor and swing it around and around, and cast it into the Tabernacle in the Holy of Holies, and we make sure that it catches onto the Ark of the Covenant, and we hold on by faith. That is the biblical picture given to us in the book of Hebrews, chapter 6. This is the last passage we'll look at, but it is an all-important one.

In Hebrews 6, the author is talking about the storms of life encountered by the patriarch Abraham. He was facing extreme old age, and he was homeless, a nomad in the desert. He was childless, for his wife Sarah had never conceived; and now both were well beyond the childbearing years.

But God had given Abraham a promise—that he would become the father of a multitude of people, and that those people would inherit that land that had been promised. God made this promise, and then He confirmed it to Abraham with a solemn oath. But the promises were slow in being fulfilled, and Abraham, in his old age, was sailing into stormy weather. But look at what Hebrews 6 says:

When God made His promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for Him to swear by, He swore by Himself, saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, He confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible to lie, we who have fled to take hope of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

God wants you to live your life as someone who is greatly encouraged. Someone said, "All discouragement is from the devil." God is the God of encouragement. Why can we be encouraged? Why can we have perpetual optimism? Because when we give Him every element of our lives, we are giving our lives to the one who sits on His throne, who rules and overrules, who works His will out perfectly as the sovereign king of the universe. Read on:

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain (the veil), where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.

In an old British commentary of the Tabernacle, I read these words: "The mariner casts his anchor down, out of sight, to the floor of the ocean; but the believer has his anchor thrown upward, equally out of sight; 'within the veil,' where the storms and commotions of this mortal life never come, where the malice of the Devil and the Satan-energized hatred of men stop short in utter impotence, where the throne of the everlasting God abides immovable and unshakable—there the anchor of the Christian's hope holds.

I was reading a biographical article the other day about a husband and wife who were both overseas in different locations. The wife received a call from their wayward, rebellious son who told them he had proposed to a girl and was about to get married. The wife and mother instantly knew this was a terrible mistake. She called her husband, and as she related it, she could sense nervous panic in his voice. But she said, "Now, honey, don't worry. The Lord is still in control." They agreed to meet, as it were, at the throne of grace, and as they prayed about this, things worked out more wonderfully than they could ever have imagined.

Those are powerful words: "God is still in control." The Bible just says, "The Lord reigns." Christ, our great High Priest, is also our Sovereign, and the veil of the Temple has been rent in two. We can now come boldly before the Throne of Grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

One of the most precious times Katrina and I have ever spent in prayer was on an occasion when we were overwhelmed with a difficulty. But we prayed about it and then we opened our hymnbook and sang as best we could Charles Wesley's great:

Rejoice the Lord is King: Your Lord and King adore!
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing, and triumph evermore.
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice, rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Jesus the Savior reigns, the God of truth and love;
When He had purged our stains He took His seat above;
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice, rejoice, again I say rejoice!

Has anyone here sailed into stormy weather? Anyone in the perfect storm? Cast your anchor upward. Hook onto the Solid Rock. Come before the Throne of Grace and recognize Christ as your Sovereign King, enthroned in heaven, and know that He cares for you.

His oath, His covenant, His blood
Support us in the whelming flood;
In every high and stormy gale,
Our anchor holds within the veil.

On Christ the Solid Rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.
All other ground is sinking sand.

The overseas news this week has again focused on resolving the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, and there was an interesting article in Wednesday's New York Times. As angry Serb forces withdrew from western Kosovo, some of them began burning and looting towns and villages, and terrorizing the villagers. But two priests from an Orthodox monastery in the region, at great personal risk, took it upon themselves to move along with the Serb troops, interceding for the villagers and asking the soldiers to spare the houses and homes of the people. They also opened their monastery to refugees, and have done what they could to relieve suffering. "They are the best people you can ever see," said one Kosovar. "They are people of God."

We all need a priest interceding for us, having mercy on us, offering us refuge. We need to be cared for by the very best person you can ever see, by someone who is a man of God. And the priest we most need is the one who is referred to in the Scriptures as our Great High Priest. When Jesus Christ came to earth, He became the climax and consummation of the sacerdotal system--the priesthood--which had been established in the opening books of the Bible, and which is featured in the book of Exodus under the leadership of Aaron, the brother of Moses.

On these Sunday mornings of May and June, we have been looking at portraits of Jesus Christ in the book of Exodus, and today we are coming to the role of High Priest. This office or position, established in the book of Exodus, portended and pointed toward the coming of Christ. It all begins in Exodus 28, when the office of the High Priest was established with its first occupant, Aaron:

Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests. Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him dignity and honor. Tell all the skilled men to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest (he is later called the "High Priest"--see Leviticus 16:32). These are the garments they are to make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash. They are to make these sacred garments for your brother Aaron and his son, so they may serve me as priests (Exodus 28:1-4).

And so was established the priesthood of Israel. Now, I know that on the surface the subject of the High Priesthood of Israel may not seem very relevant to our lives or even very interesting. Here we are, battling chronic fatigue, marital stress, financial shortcoming, global warming, school shootings, and everything else. What does the High Priesthood of ancient Israel have to do with any that? What good is such a study?

But think about it: Fourteen hundred years before Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, God Almighty created a particular office or position, later to be filled by the Messiah Himself. And by studying this office or position, we can learn a great deal about the central figure of history, the one who can help us with all the above-mentioned problems.

I'd like to begin by giving you a definition of the term High Priest:

A High Priest is someone selected from among men (thus able to sympathize with us) who is appointed by God to represent us in matters relating to God and who serves as mediator, offering sacrifices in the Most Holy Place to atone for our sins and ever living to intercede for our needs before the Throne.

This definition refers to the High Priesthood as described in the Old Testament book of Exodus, but every phrase of this sentence comes from the New Testament book of Hebrews, because one of the great themes of Hebrews is this: Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest. The office created in Exodus was fulfilled in Him. Aaron as High Priest was a "type" of Christ. So let's look at this definition phrase-by-phrase in the light of the way the book of Hebrews interprets the data from the book of Exodus.

*Selected From Among Men

*Hebrews 5:1 says: Every high priest is selected from among men.... And Hebrews 2:11 put it this way: Both the one who makes men holy (Jesus Christ) and those who are made holy (you and me) are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers... . Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity.... For this reason he had to be made like his brothers (like you and me) in every way, in order that we might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God.

In other words, the High Priest who represents us must be human himself. He must have flesh and blood and be a human being just as we are. Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish theologian, told a story about this. He said that in a certain kingdom there was a handsome prince, searching for a woman worthy enough to be his wife and to become queen of the land. One day while running an errand for his father he passed through a poor village. As he glanced out the window of his carriage his eyes fell on a beautiful peasant maiden. During ensuing days, he often passed by the young lady and soon fell in love with her by sight. But he had a problem. How could he seek her hand?

He could command her to marry him, but the prince wanted someone who would marry him out of love, not coercion. He could show up at her door in his splendid uniform in a gold carriage drawn by six horses, attendants in tow, and bearing a chest of jewels and

gold coins. But then how would he know if she really loved him or if she was just overawed and overwhelmed with his splendor? Finally he came up with another solution.

He stripped off his royal robes, put on common dress, moved into the village, and got to know her without revealing his identity. As he lived among the people, the prince and the maiden became friends, shared each other's interests, and talked about their concerns. By and by, the young lady grew to love him for who he was and because he had first loved her.

This is exactly the Gospel. The Prince of Peace Himself, Jesus Christ, laid aside the robes of his glory, garbed himself as a peasant, became a human being, and moved into our village, onto our planet, to woo us to himself. Both the one who makes us holy and those who are being made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers. That leads to the second phrase in our definition. A High Priest is someone selected from among men (thus able to sympathize with us).

*Able To Sympathize With Us

*Let's continue reading in Hebrews 2: For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

And look across the page at Hebrews 4:14ff: Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet without sin.

- When we are fretful, we remember his saying, "Now is my soul troubled."
- When we have financial shortfalls, we remember his having no pillow of his head.
- When we grieve for a passing loved one, we remember Him weeping at the tomb of Lazarus.
- When we feel that our friends let us down, we recall how he was denied by his own disciples.
- When we love someone who doesn't love us in return, we remember that he came unto his own and his own received him not.
- When we feel desperate in prayer, we remember him in Gethsemane.
- When we are weary and worn, we think of him sleeping during the storm at sea.

We identify with Him and He with us, which is why the old Negro spiritual hits a cord with us when it says:

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen

Nobody knows but Jesus.

Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down,

Sometimes I'm almost to the ground.

Nobody knows the troubles I've seen

Nobody knows but Jesus.

Appointed By God

Let's continue our definition: A High Priest is someone selected from among men (thus able to sympathize with us) who is appointed by God... Hebrews 5 says: Every high priest is selected.... Selected by whom? Verse 4: No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever...."

*To Represent Us In Matters Relating To God

And let's go on with our definition: /A High Priest is someone selected from among men (thus able to sympathize with us) who is appointed by God to represent us in matters relating to God and who serves as mediator, offering sacrifices in the Most Holy Place to atone for our sins....*/

This portion of our definition again comes from Hebrews 5, which says: Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

This is the best one-sentence description of the duties of a High Priest found within Scripture.

When you are driving down the interstate, you are separated from on-coming traffic by a wide expanse of grass called a median. If you are cooking on the stove, and you don't want your soup to boil on the one hand, or cool off on the other, you put it on medium heat. If you have two friends, and one is angry at the other, you may find yourself caught in the middle.

The words Median, Medium, and Middle all come from the same root and mean roughly the same thing: Occupying a position between the two.

The words Mediator and Mediation are of the same family. The dictionary defines a mediator as someone who interposes between two parties to reconcile them. It is a common word in our culture.

I saw an advertisement the other day for a professional seminar entitled "The Manager as Mediator." It said "The Manager-as-Mediator Seminar puts the tools of the professional mediator into the hands of your managers to build better workplace relationships, enhance performance, improve productivity, and cut the unnecessary financial costs of workplace conflict."

When workplace issues become larger and more difficult, there are Business/Labor Mediators, including Federal Mediators. You might remember that some time ago a strike by pilots for American Airlines disrupted the nation's transportation system, and President Clinton invoked emergency powers to order the pilots back to work while federal mediators worked with the two sides to find common ground and resolve the dispute.

There is a whole new profession being developed in America today, that of Professional Mediators. If you are engaged in a conflict with another person, some people are suggesting you might want to call a professional mediator before you call your lawyer and go to court.

Well, the Bible says that because of our sins and disobedience, we are in conflict with the God of the universe. Isaiah 59 says, "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; you sins have hidden his face from you."

We are separated from God by our ABCs--our attitudes, our behavior, and our conversation. We've harbor wrong attitudes in our hearts, we do wrong things, and we say wrong words. And all that damages our relationship with the God who created us for his glory.

We need someone who will approach God on our behalf, who will mediate the conflict, who will enter the Holy Place and make atonement for our sins. Who can that be? Who will be our mediator? Who will be our High Priest? Look at Hebrews 7:23: Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

And Hebrews 9:11: When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God. For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised inheritance.

*Ever Living To Intercede

*But there remains a final phrase in our definition: A High Priest is someone selected from among men (thus able to sympathize with us) who is appointed by God to represent us in matters relating to God and who serves as mediator, offering sacrifices in the Most Holy Place to atone for our sins and ever living to intercede for our needs before the Throne.

Hebrews 7:25 says that our High Priest "always lives to intercede" for us. The same truth is echoed in Romans 8:34: Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to live--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 1 John 2:1 says: My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ the righteous one.

I read an interesting item in the news this week. According to doctors at the Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Phoenix, rattlesnakes thought to be dead can still strike, bite, and kill you. In a study released last Wednesday, doctors in Phoenix said that

they have a large number of patients admitted each year suffering from bites from rattlers thought to be dead. Sometimes the snakes were shot and their heads cut off; but the snakehead retains a reflex action, and one study showed that snake heads could still make striking-type motions for up to 60 minutes after decapitation.

Satan, that old serpent, was defeated at Calvary. His head was cut off. Hebrews 2 says that our High Priest, by his death, destroyed him who holds the power of death. But he still strikes. He can still wound us. He can still hurt us and poison our relationships and spread his deadly venom into our homes and lives.

But our Great High Priest watches over us. He is concerned for us and prays for us. He ever lives to make intercession for us, and to inject us with the antitoxins of his blood.

I received a wonderfully encouraging postcard the other day with a Georgia postmark. It said, "Rev. Morgan, Even though I am only 12 years old, remember kids can make a difference. I am praying for you!! Smile, God loves you!! Kristi."

I don't know who Kristi is, but I surely appreciate her praying for me. We need people to pray for us. How would it make you feel to know that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is praying for you, interceding for you, approaching his Father's throne on your behalf.

He is. It is part of his high priestly ministry to you and me. What an indescribable blessing! As Isaac Watts put it in one of his great hymns:

Jesus, my great High Priest!

Offered His blood, and died;

My guilty conscience seeks

No sacrifice beside:

His powerful blood did once atone

And now it pleads before the throne.

Exodus 28 Dress Rehearsal: What the High Priestly Garments of Aaron Teach Us About Christ

Rob Morgan

Years ago I read a book titled *Dress for Success*, and I tried for a while to be a well-dressed executive. One of the rules, as I recall, was to avoid on all occasions the color green. I suppose that book is out-of-date, but a plethora of other books are written each year on the same subject, such as the currently popular *Your Executive Image: How to Look Your Best and Project Success for Men and Women*.

Most of us don't want to be "slobs," but neither do we want to spend a fortune on our wardrobes. Jesus told us not to be overly concerned about apparel, for not even Solomon in all his glory could arrange to be clothed as beautiful as the lowly lilies of the field.

So it came as some surprise to me when I realized that there are three separate chapters in the Old Testament devoted to one man's wardrobe. There is one man in Scripture who had to be dressed for success in the truest sense of the word, and even the details of the fabrics used in his apparel are specified. That man was Aaron, the High Priest of Israel, and here are the three chapters: In Exodus 28, his high priestly garments are described. In Exodus 39, his high priestly garments are manufactured; and in Leviticus 8, the high priestly garments are fitted for size and worn.

Why would three chapters of Scripture be devoted to such a subject as this? Many Bible readers would shrug, say "Who knows?" and mark these chapters down as some of the more mundane and boring passages of the Bible. But today and next Sunday I'd like for us to take a closer look at them.

One scholar, Paul Kiene, wrote: "The details of the high priest's garments speak of the Lord Jesus in His glory. They help us better recognize His incomparable qualities and the worth of His person, in order that we will love and honor our Lord more."

Dr. Stephen Olford added: "Each part of his attire speaks eloquently of the glories, virtues, and excellencies of our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Let's see if this is true. We'll begin in Exodus 28, the description of the High Priestly Garments of Aaron.

1 Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests.

Aaron was the older brother of Moses whom we first meet in the fourth chapter of Exodus. He was appointed by God as High Priest of Israel, and as such he foreshadowed the High Priestly ministry of Jesus Christ Himself. This is the great theme of the book of Hebrews: For this reason He (Jesus) had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people—Hebrews 2:17

In this regard, we would say that Aaron is a "type" of Christ. That is, Aaron is an Old Testament prefiguration of the coming Messiah, the ultimate and eternal High Priest on our behalf before God. The Lord planned and designed Aaron's role as a prototype to teach us about the great High Priesthood of Jesus Christ. In other words, Aaron and the High Priesthood of Israel were great, divinely-planned Old Testament object lessons designed to teach us about a vital aspect of the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let's make a small step in logic. If Aaron and the High Priesthood were prefigurations of Jesus Christ as our Great High Priest, and if three chapters of the Old Testament are devoted to detailed information about their priestly garments, shouldn't we assume that those garments have Christological significance? That they, too, can teach us something about the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, let's read on:

2 Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him dignity and honor. 3 Tell all the skilled men to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest. 4 These are the garments they are to make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash. They are to make these sacred garments for your brother Aaron and his sons, so they may serve me as priests.

Today and next Sunday I'm going to go through Aaron's wardrobe, describe and explain each garment, and look at what that garment tells us about Jesus Christ. There are basically five garments that we want to deal with:

- The high priest wore something like an apron on the outside of and over his other robes. This colorful apron was called an ephod, and it had a sash in the front of it. The front and back of the ephod were connected at the shoulders by clasps to which were attached two onyx stones, one per shoulder.
- Tied to the ephod with twisted cords of gold was a breastplate inlaid with twelve precious stones. Inside this breastplate were two very mysterious stones called the Urim and the Thummim.
- Beneath the ephod was a blue robe.
- Beneath the blue robe was a seamless white robe.
- On the high priest's head was a turban with a gold plate bearing the words "Holy to the Lord."

The Ephod

The most colorful and obvious garment was the ephod. Let's read about it in Exodus 28:6-8:

6 "Make the ephod of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen—the work of a skilled craftsman. 7 It is to have two shoulder pieces attached to two of its corners, so it can be fastened. 8 Its skillfully woven waistband is to be like it—of one piece with the ephod and made with gold, and with blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and with finely twisted linen.

For the remainder of our time today, let's begin with the ephod. First, look at the word itself; it isn't a word we use in English. The word ephod is a transliteration of the Hebrew word 'êphôwd (ay-fode'), mentioned 50 times in the Bible. It became a symbol of the priesthood. In other words, sometimes instead of saying the word "priest," the Old Testament says, "He who wears the ephod." In that sense, it was sort of like the word "crown" which is sometimes used a synonym for the king himself. Here in Exodus 28, the ephod is described. Now, turn over to Exodus 39 where its actual manufacture is described:

1 From the blue, purple and scarlet yarn they made woven garments for ministering in the sanctuary. They also made sacred garments for Aaron, as the LORD commanded Moses. 2 They made the ephod of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen. 3 They hammered out thin sheets of gold and cut strands to be worked into the blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen—the work of a skilled craftsman. 4 They made shoulder pieces for the ephod, which were attached to two of its corners, so it could be fastened. 5 Its skillfully woven waistband was like it—of one piece with the ephod and made with gold, and with blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and with finely twisted linen, as the LORD commanded Moses.

There are several things to notice about the ephod.

It's Majesty

First, it's dignity and majesty. This was designed to be a colorful and beautiful garment. Now all of us know that our clothing identifies us in certain ways. If you go to the ballpark and see someone in a baseball uniform you know that he or she is on one of the teams. If you're walking down the street and see someone in a police uniform, you know that person has authority to enforce the laws of the land. When you saw the High Priest going about His priestly duties, you saw this colorful, beautiful, one-of-a-kind garment called the ephod. Its very appearance conveyed the idea of majesty. Earlier we read this verse in Exodus 28 that tells us the reason for these garments, to give the priest dignity and honor.

And majesty is a word that befits the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Psalm 45 says that when the Messiah comes He will be clothed in majesty.
- Psalm 93 says, "The Lord reigns, He is robed in majesty. The Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength."
- Psalm 104 says, "O Lord my God, You are very great; You are clothed with splendor and majesty. He wraps Himself in light as with a garment."
- The Psalmist said: "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth."
- First Thessalonians 1:8 talks about the majesty of Christ's power.
- Peter wrote, "We were eyewitnesses of His majesty."
- The book of Jude closes with this doxology: "To the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."

The hymn says: Majesty! Worship His Majesty! Unto Jesus Be all glory, honor, and power. Our Savior was and is a High Priest of dignity, honor, and majesty.

It's Material

Second, notice the materials from which the ephod was made. Exodus 39:2 says, "They made the ephod of gold and of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen" And verse 3 tells us how the gold thread was manufactured and used: "They hammered out thin sheets of gold and cut strands to be worked into the blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen—the work of a skilled craftsman."

In other words, the ephod was made of fine linen into which were woven golden threads. The linen represents our Lord's sinless humanity and the gold represents His deity. He is the God-Man.

As you read through the Gospels, you become aware that our Lord was comfortable with His deity. He just assumed the fact that He was, is, and always would be God. This self-perception is seen, for example, in Mark 2, when a group of men lowered a paralytic through the roof of a crowded house in which Jesus was teaching. The Lord's first response was to tell the man that his sins were forgiven. The scribes, standing around and listening, knew the implications of this statement, for only God could forgive sin. "Who can forgive sin but God alone?" they complained. But Jesus seemed abundantly comfortable exercising that divine privilege.

In Matthew 14, after Jesus has stilled the winds and calmed the waves of the sea by His divine power, it says that those in the boat worshipped Him. And He received their worship, though among the Jews only God was to be worshipped. Just as the ephod was made of golden strands in fine linen, so our Lord's humanity and deity were woven together in one seamless personality. He was both man and God.

Its Colors

Next, look with me at the colors of this ephod. Exodus 39:1 says it was to be interwoven From the blue, purple and scarlet yarn.... And verse 2: They made the ephod of gold, and of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. In the last half of Exodus, we have the description of the building of the Tabernacle, the meeting place between Jehovah and the children of Israel. This Tabernacle is filled and surrounded by curtains, and they are all of these same colors. Over and over, we read the words "blue, purple, and scarlet."

In my library I have a collection of books about the Tabernacle. Without exception, each of these books say that the Tabernacle is an architectural rendition of the Lord Jesus Christ, that every element in this heavenly tent represents some truth about our Lord. And with equal unanimity, they stress the significance and importance of these colors that cover the Tabernacle and which make up the ephod of the High Priest.

The blue stands for our Lord's heavenly origin. Blue is the color of the sky, and on clear days when we look heavenward, we see an

ocean of blue.

In the human sense, our Lord was born in Bethlehem like any child, but as it relates to His divine nature, He has always existed at Bethlehem. He came down from heaven to dwell among men. John the Baptist called Him, "The One who comes down from heaven." Jesus Himself said the same on many occasions. To Nicodemus, during their famous nocturnal meeting in John 3, Jesus said: "No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

On another occasion, He said: "I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me."

He said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

Paul called Him, "The man from heaven." Can you think of any other historical figure who made such a claim? The Israelites revered Abraham more than any other person, but no one claimed that Abraham came down from heaven. No one in human history has a more remarkable and fascinating story than Alexander the Great, the youth who conquered the world. But Alexander never claimed to have come down from heaven. There is no figure in American history more revered than George Washington. We call him the "father of our country," but he never claimed to have come down from heaven for the work he did.

Jesus told His Jewish critics: "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world." Our Savior is of heavenly origin.

The second color is purple, the universal color of royalty. In 331 B. C. the aforementioned Alexander the Great found 190-year-old purple robes when he conquered Susa, the ancient Persian capital. They were in the royal treasury as part of the wardrobe of the kings.

In Roman and Byzantine history, this was the color worn by emperors. There have been periods in human history when people were executed for wearing the color purple; it was considered treasonous.

Why was this a color reserved for kings? Because only kings could afford it. Purple dye was extremely rare in the ancient world because it was produced by harvesting tiny bits of mucus from various sea mollusks! The city of Tyre was famous for the production of purple fabric, and estimates are that it took 8,500 shellfish to produce 1 gram of the dye. One account I read said, "In processing the dye, workers had to crack the shell and dig out a vein located near the shellfish head with a small pointed utensil. The mucus-like contents of the veins were then mixed together and spread on silk or linen. The saturated fabric was then placed in the sun, where the colors changed from light green to blue to purplish red."

Demand for this purple dye reached such proportions that certain species of Mediterranean shellfish became almost extinct in the ancient world. No wonder it was the color of royalty.

The Pharaohs highly valued this purple yarn, and when the Israelites left they plundered the Egyptians, taking not only their silver and gold, but also their precious yarns and fabrics. The purple in the robe of the High Priest was rare and beautiful and it represented the royalty of the Messiah.

When the Magi came to Bethlehem looking for the Christchild, they asked, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?"

When they crucified Jesus, over His head hung the words: "King of the Jews."

The Bible says, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Timothy 1:17).

And the book of Revelation tells us that when Jesus comes again, He will have this name written on His robes: "King of kings and Lord of lords!"

The third color is scarlet. That represents the blood of Christ. The High Priest, by the very definition of his role, dealt in blood, in the sacrifices offered to atone for sin. Hebrews 4:11-12, picking up on that truth, says, "When Christ came as high priest ... He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption."

There is a fountain filled with blood

Drawn from Emmanuel's veins.

And sinners plunged beneath that flood

Lose all their guilty stains.

So in the majesty of its appearance, materials, and colors, the ephod taught the people about the coming Messiah.

The Onyx Stones

The last thing I'd like us to notice is the two onyx stones that fastened the ephod together at the shoulders of the High Priest. Look at verse 4: They made shoulder pieces for the ephod, which were attached to two of its corners, so it could be fastened.

In other words, the High Priest slipped the ephod over his head and attached it at the shoulder straps, and at the spot where it fastened on either shoulder was an onyx stone. Those onyx stones are described more fully in Exodus 28:9ff:

9 Take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel 10 in the order of their birth—six names on one stone and the remaining six on the other. 11 Engrave the names of the sons of Israel on the two stones the way a gem cutter engraves a seal. Then mount the stones in gold filigree settings 12 and fasten them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. Aaron is to bear the names on his shoulders as a memorial before the LORD.

So we read in Exodus 39:6:

They mounted the onyx stones in gold filigree settings and engraved them like a seal with the names of the sons of Israel. Then they fastened them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel, as the Lord commanded Moses.

It was like a general's uniform with four or five stars on the shoulders, except in this case it wasn't stars denoting rank and power, it was stones denoting those whom he represented before God. The High Priest always bore the names of children of Israel on his shoulders. He carried them. When he knelt to pray, the Lord looked down at His shoulders and saw there the names of those whom he bore. What does that tell us about our Great High Priest?

Deuteronomy 33:1 says, "The one the LORD loves rests between His shoulders."

Deuteronomy 1:31 says, "There you saw how the LORD your God carried you...."

Isaiah 46:3 says, "Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all you who remain of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and gray hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.

Isaiah 63:9: "In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy He redeemed them; He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old."

Jesus told about the shepherd who left the nine-nine in the fold and went out, searching for that one lost lamb. And when He found it, He joyfully put it on His shoulders and went home, calling his neighbors and saying, "Rejoice with me. I have found my lost sheep."

Do you have a load too heavy to bear this morning? Are your burdens too great? Is the way too hard? We do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. We have one who bears us on His shoulders, who carries us, who shoulders our load. He is the Man of Majesty. He is the God-Man. He is the man from heaven, the man of royalty, the man who shed His blood for you and me.

This is your great High Priest. He represents you before God, and He is always bearing you on His shoulders. He carries you.

I must tell Jesus all of my trials;
I cannot bear these burdens alone;
In my distress He kindly will help me;
He ever loves and (carries) His own.

Exodus 28 Dress Rehearsal: What The High Priestly Garments of Aaron Tell Us About Christ (Part 2)

Rob Morgan

There's an old saying that "clothes make the man." That's hardly true, but there was one occasion in the Bible in which clothes predicted the man. Last Sunday and this Sunday I'm bringing a two-part series on the unusual subject of the High Priestly Garments of Aaron, and what they teach us about Jesus Christ, our great High Priest.

Aaron, the older brother of Moses, was appointed by God to be the first High Priest of the nation of Israel. Three chapters in the Bible are devoted to describing his clothing, the elaborate regalia that he wore on official occasions.

- In Exodus 28, his priestly garments are described.
- In Exodus 39, his priestly garments are manufactured.
- In Leviticus 8, his priestly garments are fitted and worn.

It's clear from the book of Hebrews that Aaron was a "type" or a foreshadowing of Christ. The Old Testament High Priesthood found its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus, our great High Priest. With that in mind, we have made a little step of logic. If the Old Testament priest is a prefiguration of Christ, and if three chapters in the Old Testament are devoted to his wardrobe, we might assume that his clothing has Messianic or Christological implications. There are five different garments we should look at here. The first was the ephod, which we studied last week.

The Ephod

"Ephod" isn't a word or a garment we're very familiar with, but it was quite important in the Old Testament where it is mentioned about 50 times. It was the outermost garment, and it resembled an elaborate apron. It came to represent the priesthood itself. Last week we noticed four things about the ephod:

1. It's majesty, which speaks of the honor and majesty of Christ.
2. It's materials—white linen interwoven with threads of solid gold, representing the sinless humanity of Christ interwoven with His divinity.
3. It's colors—blue, representing our Lord's heavenly origin; purple, representing his royalty; scarlet, representing his shed blood.
4. Its onyx stones, which held the garment together at the shoulders. On these stones were inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, reminding us of how our Lord bears us on His shoulders day and night.

The Blue Robe

Underneath this ephod was a blue robe, which is described in Exodus 28:31-35:

31 "Make the robe of the ephod entirely of blue cloth, 32 with an opening for the head in its center. There shall be a woven edge like a collar around this opening, so that it will not tear. 33 Make pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yarn around the hem of the robe, with gold bells between them. 34 The gold bells and the pomegranates are to alternate around the hem of the robe. 35 Aaron must wear it when he ministers. The sound of the bells will be heard when he enters the Holy Place before the LORD and when he comes out, so that he will not die.

We're already seen that the color blue represents our Lord's heavenly origin. But the most intriguing aspect of this blue robe is that along the hem at the bottom were attached little ornaments: Pomegranates made out of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and little bells made out of gold.

What do the bells represent? This is one of the most interesting things I've run across recently. You know, I love bells. I love our handbell choirs. I love being near a church or a cathedral and listening to the bells chime the hours. The pealing of church bells is, to me, one of the most beautiful sounds in the world.

In my book, *On This Day*, I told the story of a fourth-century man named Paulinus, who was born in the area of France known as Bordeaux. He was from an extremely wealthy and influential family and was considered one of Europe's most eligible bachelors, but he fell in love with a Spanish lady named Theresia, who was a Christian. She shared the gospel freely with him, and as Paulinus investigated Christianity, he was impressed with its truthfulness and relevance. At age 34, he gave his life to Christ and was baptized alongside his brother. In time they decided to adopt a much simpler lifestyle. Most of their possessions were sold, the money going to the poor. The couple moved to a small town near Naples, and purchased a long, two-story building where they helped the poor and preached the Gospel. According to tradition Paulinus was the first person to introduce bells into Christian worship. That was in the fourth century.

But now I know that Lord Himself who prescribed the first bells in the history of worship, here in the book of Exodus. These were not church bells; they were not in a cathedral or tower, but on the hems of the blue robe of the High Priest so that even when the people could not see him, they could hear him. Even when he was in the Holies of Holies on the Day of Atonement and out of their vision, they could still hear him and be reassured.

Our great High Priest has gone into the Holy of Holies in heaven, but we still hear Him. His Word rings and chime in our heart. His promises peal forth. Every time we open this Book we hear the sweet sound of His voice, reverberating over the ages like deep resonating bells.

Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life,

Let me more of their beauty see, wonderful words of life;

Words of life and beauty teach me faith and duty.

Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life.

What do the pomegranates represent? Pomegranates in the Bible are often a symbol of fruitfulness. Any of you who have ever eaten a pomegranate know that it is chock full of seeds. It has a rough, leathery shell on the outside, and when you split it you find inside a mass of hundreds of edible seeds. When the twelve spies ventured into the Promised Land, they returned with armfuls of pomegranates to show how verdant and fruitful the land was. It was described as a land of “fig trees and pomegranates.” When King Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, he had pomegranates carved into the tops or the capitals of the massive columns. This indicated the fruitfulness of the ministry of the High Priest.

The word of Christ and the fruitfulness of Christ—the two go together like the alternating bells and pomegranates on the hem of the High Priest’s robe. The other day I read the testimony of a man who said that the wearing of a certain pair of socks changed his life. He had made a trip as a boy on a canal boat and was expecting to leave home on another trip; but he accidentally hurt his foot while chopping wood. The blue dye in his homemade socks poisoned the wound and he was kept at home. A revival broke out in that neighborhood, and during that revival he was converted to Christ. “New desires and new purposes took possession of me,” he said, “and I was determined to seek an education in order that I might live more usefully for Christ.”

Do you know the name of that boy? He was James Garfield, later the 20th president of the United States—and the second one to die by assassination.

I read just the other day about the well-known football announcer Pat Summerall. For 21 years he called the football games with John Madden. For much of his life, Pat Summerall was enslaved to alcohol, but when he was 66 years old he heard the truth of God’s Word, was saved and baptized, and there he found new life. Now he’s speaking out and telling others what Christ has done for him.

The White Tunic

Beneath the blue robe was a white tunic. It was a spotless white robe of woven fabric, made of the finest quality. It tells us of the underlying sinless perfection of Christ. Hebrews 4:15 says: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.”

The Breastpiece

Now we come to the breastpiece. Over the white tunic was the blue robe. Over the blue robe of the High Priest was the multi-colored ephod. And attached to the ephod was the breastpiece. It is described to us in Exodus 28:15-30:

15 “Fashion a breastpiece for making decisions—the work of a skilled craftsman. Make it like the ephod: of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen. 16 It is to be square—a span long and a span wide—and folded double. 17 Then mount four rows of precious stones on it. In the first row there shall be a ruby, a topaz and a beryl; 18 in the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and an emerald; 19 in the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; 20 in the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx and a jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings. 21 There are to be twelve stones, one for each of the names of the sons of Israel, each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes.

22 “For the breastpiece make braided chains of pure gold, like a rope. 23 Make two gold rings for it and fasten them to two corners of the breastpiece. 24 Fasten the two gold chains to the rings at the corners of the breastpiece, 25 and the other ends of the chains to the two settings, attaching them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front. 26 Make two gold rings and attach them to the other two corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod. 27 Make two more gold rings and attach them to the bottom of the shoulder pieces on the front of the ephod, close to the seam just above the waistband of the ephod. 28 The rings of the breastpiece are to be tied to the rings of the ephod with blue cord, connecting it to the waistband, so that the breastpiece will not swing out from the ephod.

29 “Whenever Aaron enters the Holy Place, he will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart on the breastpiece of decision as a continuing memorial before the LORD. 30 Also put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron’s

heart whenever he enters the presence of the LORD. Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the LORD.

This breastpiece was nine inches square and folded double with four rows of three precious stones, attached at corners with gold rings and blue cords. Each of the twelve precious stones represented one of the tribes of Israel so that every time Aaron entered the Holy Place, he would have the children of Israel on his heart. What does this speak of except the love that the High Priest has for His children. Think of what a poignant and perfect picture this is. We are His jewels, and He has us on His heart!

You are God's jewel, and He has you on His heart. Constantly and continually, our great High Priest loves you. Furthermore He guides you. As we read, this breastpiece was folded double, making a sort of pouch. And in that pouch were two stones called the Urim and the Thummim. There are transliterated Hebrew words, and the meaning is unclear. It may be that Urim means Lights, and Thummim means Perfections.

One of the great mysteries of the Bible is that we do not know how the ancient High Priests used the Urim and Thummim. Some scholars think that the two stones were alike and had something like our words yes and no on them. When a decision had to be made, like "Shall we go to war against the Philistines?" the High Priest would pray and then draw one of those stones from the pouch of his breastpiece, and it would indicate the answer from God. Others think that these were two diamonds, and when the answer was yes one of them glowed in an unusual way and the other one dimmed.

The Urim and Thummim are very mysterious to us, but their meaning is clear. God wants to guide His people. He wants to lead and guide you through this time in your life. There's an old German hymn that says:

If thou but suffer God to guide thee, and hope in Him through all thy ways,

He'll give thee strength, whate'er betide thee, and bear thee through the evil days;

Who trust in God's unchanging love builds on a rock that naught can move.

So the ephod tells us of our High Priest's majesty, of his dual nature, of his heavenly origin, his royalty, and his blood. The onyx stones tell us that He bears us on His shoulders. The blue robe with the pomegranates and bells tells us that our heavenly Savior has a ministry that rings with the Gospel and bears fruit. His white robe tells of His underlying sinless perfection. The breastpiece tells us that we are constantly on His heart, and the two mysterious stones tell us that He wants to guide our lives. That leaves only one garment for us yet to consider—the turban.

The Turban

Look at Exodus 28:36—"Make a plate (a medallion) of pure gold and engrave on it as on a seal: Holy to the Lord. Fasten a blue cord to it to attach it to the turban. It will be on Aaron's forehead, and he will bear the guilt involved in the sacred gifts the Israelites consecrate, whatever their gifts may be. It will be on Aaron's forehead continually so that they will be acceptable to the Lord."

The words "Holy to the Lord" means that the High Priest was devoted and dedicated exclusively to Jehovah. The Lord looked upon this High Priest as Holy. In the Old Testament, if a man who was a sinner brought an offering to the Lord, it could not be accepted because the man was riddled with sinfulness. His motives were sinful. His mind was sinful. His whole life was sinful. But he could give it to the High Priest, and as God looked at that High Priest He saw someone who was proclaimed holy in His sight. And so the man's offering was accepted, not in his own name, but in the name of the High Priest.

When we approach God we can never do so in our own righteousness. Our motives are sinful. Our mind is sinful. Our whole lives are riddled in sin. But when we come in the name of our great High Priest, we are accepted for He is holy and He alone is holy. Romans, chapter 3 says:

20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. 21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.

The Apostle Paul said in Philippians, chapter 3:

8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

This is our great High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us, robed in majesty, clothed in splendor, the one who ever

loves and lives for His own. Do you know Him? Have you received Him? Does He represent you before the Throne in heaven?

Jesus, my great High Priest,

Offered His blood, and died;

My guilty conscience seeks

No sacrifice beside:

His powerful blood did once atone,

And now it pleads before the throne.

(Isaac Watts)

Exodus 40 The Heavenly Tent

Rob Morgan

Today we are coming to the end of our series of messages on the subject "Glimpses of Jesus in the book of Exodus," and I want to say as we conclude our studies that part of the reason for this series is to demonstrate once again the veracity and validity of Christianity as a belief system. I believe that our faith is under attack today by scientists, educators, philosophers, and by many in the public media. We are living in a nation in which a teenager will put a gun to another's head, ask "Do you believe in God?" and if the answer is affirmative, pull the trigger. Dieon Sanders, the football player, said the other day that had he converted to Islam or to some New Age Religion, no one would have said a thing. But because he openly became a follower of Jesus Christ, he has been made the object of ridicule and satire in the newspapers.

Well, one of the ways in which Christianity has been attacked has involved its truthfulness. Many are trying to claim that the Bible is not really true, that it isn't verifiable, that it isn't accurate, that it is essentially a book of religious fables and legends.

But those who say such things must then explain away many clear evidences for Christianity, including how it is that the person of Jesus Christ is presented in such a striking, detailed way throughout the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, in every one of the 39 books, books that were written hundreds of years before Christ was actually born.

There are over 300 Old Testament verbal, detailed, prophetic descriptions covering all phases of our Lord's life and ministry. And in addition to the verbal prophecies, the Old Testament is packed with three-dimensional pictures, objects, events, and personalities that prefigure the coming Messiah in remarkable ways.

Bible teacher A. T. Pierson said that the Old Testament writers added feature after feature and touch after touch and tint after tint, until what was at first a drawing without color, a mere outline or profile came at last to be a perfect portrait with the very hues of living flesh.

When the religious leaders of his own day questioned Christ's identity, He challenged them to search the (Old Testament) Scriptures, for, He said, "they testify of me." Beginning with Moses and the books of Genesis and Exodus, Jesus explained to his followers the things contained therein about himself.

Remember that Exodus was written 1400 years or so before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. What if I wrote a book and tried to describe someone who would live 1400 years from now? I can't even imagine what the world is going to be like 100 years from now, in the year 2100. I can't imagine what the world will be like in 500 years, should the Lord delay his coming. Will the human race still be alive? Will we be populating other planets? Will we be traveling through space? The year 3400—1400 years from now—is beyond even the imagination of most writers of science fiction.

And yet 1400 years before he showed up, Jesus Christ was portrayed in incredible detail by Moses in the book of Exodus. Thus far in this series, we have seen how Christ was seen in advance...

- In the very theme of Exodus itself—redemption
- By the angel of the Lord in the burning bush
- By the man Moses, for God predicted that He would raise up a prophet like Moses from among his brethren, who was to be obeyed

- By the Passover Lamb
- And the Tree that made the bitter pool better
- And the Manna in the wilderness which portended the Bread of Life coming down from heaven
- By the Rock that yielded water when struck by the rod of the lawgiver
- By the High Priest who served as a forerunner to our Great High Priest

Today in this final message, I want us to look at the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Here is a study that could take weeks and weeks to complete, because the ancient Tabernacle is one big, multi-faceted object lesson pointing to Christ. It deserves a much fuller study. But at least today we can hit the high spots, beginning with our Scripture reading from Exodus 40:

So the Tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month in the second year. When Moses set up the Tabernacle, he put the bases in place, erected the frames, inserted the crossbars and set up the posts. Then he spread the tent over the Tabernacle and put the covering over the tent as the Lord commanded him.

He took the Testimony and placed it in the ark, attached the poles to the ark and put the atonement cover over it. Then he brought the ark into the Tabernacle and hung the shielding curtain and shielded the ark of the Testimony, as the Lord commanded him.

Moses placed the table in the Tent of Meeting... He placed the lampstand in the Tent of Meeting... Moses placed the gold altar in the Tent of Meeting in front of the curtain and burned fragrant incense on it... He set the altar of burnt offerings near the entrance to the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting... He placed the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar and put water in it for washing... Then Moses set up the courtyard around the Tabernacle...

Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle....

All in all, the Bible devotes 2 chapters to the creation of the universe, 4 chapters to the birth of Jesus Christ, but 50 chapters to the planning and erection of this wilderness Tabernacle. The entire latter part of Exodus is devoted to it. There are 13 chapters in Exodus, 18 chapters in Leviticus, 13 chapters in Numbers, 2 chapters in Deuteronomy, and 4 chapters in the book of Hebrews—all related to the Tabernacle.

Why so much emphasis? Because of the way in which every detail of this tent points to Jesus Christ. The book of Hebrews says that the Tabernacle served as a pattern for heavenly truth. One scholar said, "Every detail of the Tabernacle points to some aspect of the Person and work of our Savior." Another wrote, "There is no portion of Scripture richer in meaning, or more perfect in his teaching of the plan of redemption, than this divinely designed building."

And John the Apostle himself put it this way: The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us and we have seen His glory."

Today I would like to conduct a brief tour of the Tabernacle, and then show a few of the more obvious ways in which the life and ministry of Jesus Christ is foreshadowed in this ancient tent.

The Grand Tour

As you approached the Tabernacle, you would have seen a rectangular fence of white linen suspended from silver rods attached to sturdy poles set in brass sockets. The fence was 7-1/2 feet high, so you would have had a hard time looking over it. It ran 150 feet in length (or half the length of a football field) and 75 feet in width. It had one door or gate, facing east.

Going through the gate, you found yourself in a courtyard. Your feet were on sand, for there was no flooring to the Tabernacle, perhaps to remind the people that they were on pilgrimage.

The first thing you would come to would be a huge brass altar where animals were sacrificed and burned. Behind the altar was a brass basin, filled with water for the priests to wash their hands and feet before entering the Tabernacle.

Behind the laver was the Tabernacle itself, a tent, 45 feet long and 15 feet wide and 15 feet high. It was covered with rather plain looking badger skins. Once inside, you would have found the tent divided into two rooms. The first and larger room was called the Holy Place. This was the place of daily fellowship and worship between the priest and the Lord. On one side of the room sat a small table with several pieces of bread. On the other side of the room was the golden seven-branched candlestick. There was also an altar of incense. Then there was a doorway into the inner room, and the doorway was covered with a heavy curtain or veil. Beyond the veil was a small cube-shaped room, 15 x 15 x 15, called the Most Holy Place, or the Holy of Holies. Inside this room was the Ark of the Covenant. On top of the ark were golden angels, and it is here that God dwelt personally on earth.

The Tabernacle was portable, so it could be packed away and carried with the children of Israel; but it wasn't an easy job. The

Tabernacle itself was made up of three tons of gold, five tons of silver, four tons of brass, and an assortment of jewels, fine wood, and heavy tapestries. It took 8500 people to transport it. To be perfectly reproduced today, it would cost millions of dollars. I have a book on the Tabernacle published in 1976 which said that the equivalent cost of the Tabernacle would be \$10 million, so I suppose today, considering the inflation of the 70s and 80, we'd be looking at \$30 or 40 million.

Where did the Israelites get such money? The Egyptians gave it to them as they were leaving. The Bible says that the children of Israel spoiled the Egyptians.

Now what does it all mean? In what way does this Tabernacle teach us of Jesus Christ?

Points of Comparison

Well, this is where we could spend the rest of the summer. For the sake of brevity, I'd like to point out three things:

First, the purpose of the Tabernacle was provide God a dwelling among men. Exodus 25:8 says, And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. Likewise the great purpose of the coming of Jesus Christ was that God might dwell among men. The angel said, "His name shall be called Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, means "God With Us." And John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt (or Tabernacled) among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." But for God to dwell among us, there had to be a reconciliation made at the cross. So that leads us to the second point of comparison—the placement of the furnishing in the Tabernacle.

Suppose you flew over the Tabernacle and looked at all the items in it. You would find them so arranged as to form a cross. Running East to West would be the Gate, leading to the Altar, leading to the Basin, leading to the door into the Tabernacle proper, leading through the Holy Place and into the Holy of Holies, ending with the Ark of the Covenant. Running perpendicular or crosswise would be the table of showbread on the right and the Menorah on the left. It formed a perfect cross, as though a shadow or silhouette of Calvary had been cast across the very arrangement of the furnishings.

Third, there is the poignancy of each item of the Tabernacle, for each of the furnishings represents a different aspect of Christ's life and ministry. There are several of these that I'd like to briefly point out today.

The Fence

If you were standing outside the Tabernacle, all you would see surrounding the dwelling place of God's presence would be a sea of white linen. The fence around the Tabernacle courtyard was made of white linen suspended from silver rods attached to sturdy poles that were set into brass sockets. This expanse of white purity surrounding the presence of God represents the Lord's stainless holiness and purity. We are all on the outside of that, and we are separated from God by the blinding purity of His holiness, compared to which all our righteousness is but filthy rags. How, then, can we ever come into God's presence? How can we ever know him as our friend and helper? We cannot climb over the fence, we can but enter through the one and only door or gate.

The Door

And Jesus Christ represents that door. He said in John 10: "I am the door." The more modern translations accurately say, "I am the gate." He said, "The one who does not enter by the gate but climbs in by some other way is a thief and a robber... I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved."

Now, if we had been among the Israelites when the Tabernacle was standing in the desert, and if we had gone through the gate, we would have noticed that it was actually a thick, rich, multi-colored curtain, and thus set apart from the white fence on either side of it. Exodus 27:16 says, For the entrance to the courtyard, provide a curtain twenty cubits long, of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted (white) linen...

These four colors have obvious meaning. The white, as we have seen, represents the purity of Jesus Christ, he was sinless and blameless, the perfect man. Purple was the color of royalty, representing the Kingship of Christ. Blue is the color of heaven, representing the Lord's heavenly origin. And scarlet... what do you think the scarlet represents? The blood of Christ, shed for the remission of sins.

The Altar

Entering in through the gate, the first thing you noticed was the huge altar for the burning of the sacrifices. Just to help see the dimensions of it, it was a little larger in size than a king-size bed, being 7-1/2 feet square, and 4-1/2 feet high. It was raised up over an area for the building of a fire, and in the middle was a grate to hold the sacrifices under which the fire burned. It was a little bit like a large, elaborate grill. It was here that the lambs were slain as burnt offerings for sin.

This points, of course, to Jesus Christ who offered himself as the Lamb of God, slain as a burnt offering for the sin of the world.

We've never lived in a time of so much sin. I read a review the other day in a London newspaper about a new, filthy, pornographic movie titled "Eyes Wide Shut" starring Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, and I was amazed at how lewd and lustful and evil it was. The director was a man named Stanley Kubrick who died in his sleep while making this movie, and I thought to myself, how terrible to be flung into eternity to face God having just made something like that.

But all of us have lewd and lustful and evil tendencies. All of us produce unholy movies in our minds. All of us are sinners by nature and by choice. Jesus Christ came as the Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice, to atone for our sins and to bear our guilt and punishment. That is the first stop along the way into God's presence.

The Basin

After walking around the huge burnt altar, we come to a large basin, made of brass and filled with water. It was a place of washing. The priests were commanded to wash their hands and feet here before entering the holy place. This is a picture of the mercy and blood of Christ in cleansing the believer from the sins he commits after he is saved. It is a picture of daily cleansing. Do you remember when Jesus was washing his disciples' feet in John 13, and Peter said, "Lord, wash me all over." Jesus said, "He who has had a bath does not need to be washed all over, but only his feet." In other words, when we come to Christ we are bathed in his blood and forgiven of all our sins. But as we make our way day by day through this world, our feet get dirty. That is, we fail and falter sometimes, and we disappoint God with our attitudes, activities, and words. This doesn't jeopardize our salvation, but it does hinder our fellowship with God. And so we daily confess our sins and find daily cleansing. 1 John 2 says, "My dear children, I write these things so that you will not sin; but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one."

There is one very interesting added detail about the basin. According to Exodus 38:8, it was made from the brass looking glasses (mirrors) given by the women as freewill gifts. The lesson seems to be this: We tend to be very concerned about the way we look, spending millions of dollars on makeup and matters relating to our outward appearance. But by asking the women to give up their mirrors, God was perhaps saying, not that we should become unkempt and untidy, but that we should be much more concerned about our spiritual cleanness and beauty before the Lord. Someone said, "If we gave us just a little of the time spent in washing and beautifying our skin, and spent that time washing and beautifying our souls, we could see lives transformed overnight."

The Holy Place

Passing by the laver or basin, we next come to the tent itself, the Tabernacle. Entering the door, we come into the first room—the Holy Place. Here the priest saw three pieces of furniture. On the right was a table on which were twelve loaves of bread. This represented Christ as the Bread of Life that came down from heaven to sustain and nourish his people. Across the room on the left was the seven-branched candlestand, representing Christ as the light of the world. And directly in front of him was the altar of incense. Here incense was burned, the smoke mingling with the prayers of the priests. This represents Christ's role as our High Priest, making intercession for his people as we talked about last week.

The Holy of Holies

Beyond the altar of incense was thick curtain, a veil, and beyond that veil was the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place where only the High Priest could enter, and only once a year on the Day of Atonement. It was shaped as a perfect cube, 15 x 15 x 15, representing God's perfection. You might recall that in Ephesians 3, Paul speaks about the perfect cube of God's love, its height and breadth and length. In Revelation 21, the city of New Jerusalem comes down out of the new heavens and it is in the shape of a perfect cube, 1500 miles in all directions.

This represented the dwelling place of God on earth, and inside this Holy of Holies there was only one piece of furniture—the Ark of the Covenant. Inside the ark was the broken law of God, and the lid to the ark was called the mercy seat. Rising up from the mercy seat were the images of two angels. And we're told that the presence of God dwelt between those angels.

Once a year, the High Priest of Israel entered the Most Holy Place and sprinkled the blood of the Passover Lamb on the mercy seat that separated the broken law from the holiness of God, and thus made atonement for the sins of the people.

The book of Hebrews, in explaining the typology of this, wrote: When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption... (Hebrews 9:12).

This is why the moment Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the temple was suddenly rent from top to bottom, allowing us access through his blood into the presence of our Almighty Friend.

We've only scratched the surface of the teachings about the tabernacle. There are a thousand details here, and lesson upon lesson to discover. But it all comes down to this. God has told us in every way imaginable about his love for us. He has pictured it for us in

picture after picture and in type after type. He even constructed a tent in the wilderness to outline for us the whole redemptive process. It only remains for us to believe and receive. Someone once put it like this:

O, the love that drew salvation's plan!

O, the grace that brought it down to man!

O, the mighty gulf that God did span

At Calvary!

Exodus 24 THE PROMPTABLE HEART

Rob Morgan

November 6th of last year was a frustrating day for me. I'd just returned from an overseas trip, teaching at Holsby Brunn, and I was quite tired. I really could have used a few days to rehabilitate. But I returned to a heavy schedule with quite a bit of work, a couple of deadlines, and several problems to deal with. And so I thought I'd just plunge right in. But by mid-morning my strength was gone, and so were my spirits.

I finally just closed the door to my study, swept everything off my desk (so to speak), and spent several hours studying a rather unusual subject in the Bible, the subject of the Tabernacle—God's tent in the wilderness—as presented in the book of Exodus. Somehow that study was like a tonic for me that day, and I realized that there is something about studying this Old Testament tent—the Tabernacle—that refreshes our hearts and brings us face to face with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, today I'd like for us to begin a summertime series of messages on God's Tent—the Tabernacle. In the Old Testament book of Exodus, the Lord commanded Moses and the Israelites to build a portable church, so to speak, in the desert. There was a fence of fabric linens enclosing a rectangular courtyard. Inside this fence was an altar, a large wash basin, and a tent. This tent had two rooms, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The Most Holy Place, or the Holy of Holies, represented the very dwelling place of God among the Israelites.

This courtyard and tent is called in the Bible the Tabernacle. The word "Tabernacle" comes from a Latin word "tabernaculum" meaning, simply, "tent." And one of the surprising things to me about the Tabernacle is the amount of space devoted to it in the Bible. I've counted fifty chapters of Scripture that are, in large measure, given over to this subject. Fifty chapters! The Bible only devotes two chapters to the creation of the universe and four chapters to the birth of Jesus Christ, but fifty chapters are given over to this wilderness Tabernacle.

There are thirteen chapters in Exodus, eighteen chapters in Leviticus, thirteen chapters in Numbers, two chapters in Deuteronomy, and four chapters in the book of Hebrews—all related to the Tabernacle.

Why so much emphasis? It is because every detail of this tent points to Jesus Christ. The book of Hebrews says that the Tabernacle served as a pattern for heavenly truth. Every aspect of the Tabernacle points to some truth about the Person and work of Christ, as we'll see in coming weeks.

Today's message is really a stewardship message, because the first thing that happened in the building of the Tabernacle was the gathering of the needed resources. Let's begin in Exodus 24:13. In this passage, the God of Israel—Jehovah—called Moses to the top of Mount Sinai:

Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God. He said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them." When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

It was during these forty days and forty nights, as Moses was atop Mount Sinai, that God gave him the blueprints for this remarkable Tabernacle. Moses must have been utterly overwhelmed at how expensive it was going to be to build. So the very first thing that happened was this: the Israelites began a capital stewardship campaign. Look at the next verse, Exodus 25:1ff:

The LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose

heart prompts him to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and hides of sea cows; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.”

To put it very simply, the Tabernacle was a worship center where God, in all His glory, could dwell in the midst of His people. It was designed to be portable, because the nation of Israel at that time was nomadic. They had followed Moses out of Egypt, but had not yet settled down in the Promised Land. So the Lord led them to construct this small campus—a complex of courtyards and curtains—to house a very special tent where His glory would dwell among them. In this passage, there are three emphases:

The Vision

First is the vision. Moses said to the Israelites, in effect, just what I believe He is saying to you and me today: “I want to do something here, and it is both expansive and expensive.” This may have been a portable tent, but it was by no means ordinary. When I use the word “tent,” it really doesn’t convey what we’re talking about here. If you want to get into camping, you can purchase a small single-person domed tent for as little as twenty dollars, or you could spend several hundred dollars on a multi-room tent for your family. Years ago, I paid a couple of hundred dollars for a very nice tent that our family used for several years during summer vacations.

But how much would it cost us to build an exact replica of this tent that the Israelites built at the Lord’s command in the desert? One Old Testament scholar calculated the amount of gold, silver, precious stones, wood, leathers, and fabrics contained in the Tabernacle. For example, Exodus 38:24 says that the gold used in the Tabernacle was over 29 talents. In other words, there were 2,842 pounds of gold in the Tabernacle. Gold is currently valued at about \$300 per ounce, which means that the total value just of the gold would be over thirteen million dollars. The value of the other materials would probably double that, for there were five tons of silver, four tons of brass, and an assortment of jewels, fine woods, and rich tapestries. So it was no little vision and no little tent. In today’s terms, this was a \$30-plus million project!

What if I stood up here today and tried to persuade our church to adopt a thirty million dollar building project? Right now, we aren’t sure we’re ready to handle a little renovation costing a scant one or two million. And think about this—the Israelites were now a nation of unemployed workers. They’d all just lost their jobs! And yet God said, “I want you to build a tent for me. And, by the way, it’s going to cost thirty million.”

You know, God does not always call on us to do things cheaply. He doesn’t always want His work to be done in bargain basements. He understands that in this world it is going to take a certain amount of money to fulfill His purposes, plans, projects, and programs.

He wants to give us a vision. You know, I have a vision for what I believe God wants to do in this church. I believe He wants us to acquire adjacent property as it becomes available. I believe He wants us to build out the lower level of this building for an expanding children’s ministry. I believe He wants us to renovate our facilities for our teens and adults. I believe He wants us to engage in a great evangelistic ministry that will win multitudes of people to the Lord. I think He may want us to one day build a beautiful oval-shaped worship center that will hold great crowds of people He’s going to give us. And I think He might want us to send out, not just one missionary team, but several, to various strategic points on this globe. I’ve been praying that God would start a revival here that would touch the world and that, in some way, would change all of subsequent church history.

But these visions are not cheap. We may have heavenly aspirations, but we are located on this earth, and as long as our feet are on this earth we have bills to pay and obligations to meet.

So the Lord gave Moses a vision, but it had a high pricetag. Where could a bunch of newly-liberated, unemployed slaves afford that kind of vision? Where would those sorts of resources come from? Applying this to ourselves, we could ask, “How can we generate the resources to do what God is calling us to do as a church?”

The Provision

That brings me to the second parallel between the Tabernacle and our own ministry needs here at : The provision—God has already provided the needed resources! He never gives vision without provision. He anticipates the need and meets it in advance. As someone once said, “God’s work done in God’s way will always have God’s resources.”

Look with me at Exodus 3. This is the chapter in which God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, appointing him to return to Egypt and deliver His people from slavery. God made Moses one promise that we frequently overlook. It is in verses 21ff: And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold, and for clothing, which you will put on your sons

and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians.

And that's just what happened. Look at Exodus 12: 31 During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested. 32 Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me." 33 The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. "For otherwise," they said, "we will all die!" 34 So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. 35 The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. 36 The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians.

Here is the great principle: The Lord places in our hands the resources of the world. Deuteronomy 8:18 says: But remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth.... All we have is His and it all comes from Him. The Bible teaches that the earth is the Lord's and everything in it (Psalm 24:1).

He gives and gives and gives to His people. Why? Why do we have the money we have? Some of you may have stocks and bonds. Why does God give us those things? The mutual funds? The saving accounts? The houses and lands and possessions?

To put it differently, why did God allow the Israelites to plunder the Egyptians? Why did He make the Egyptians so favorably disposed toward the Israelites, and why did He want this group of ex-slaves to have so much wealth?

The Lord wasn't as interested in giving them a lavish lifestyle as He was in giving them the resources for the building of the Tabernacle. He was planning ahead. He was entrusting the Israelites with the material needed for His special tent.

He was putting the needed resources in their pockets and purses in advance. God could have sent the gold and silver and precious stones down from heaven just as He sent the manna. He could have airlifted the timber and linen. It could have arrived by parachute. But He loves it when His people are involved, when they are His channels for doing His work, so He entrusts the resources to us. Everything we need for our ministries—every dollar and every penny—has already been provided. It is in our billfolds and bank accounts right now. His provision for His vision is given in advance. That leads to the final parallel...

The Decision

Each of us has a decision to make, and we should make it without coercion or human pressure, for I believe God will prompt us. But we must have willing hearts. Look again at our text in Exodus 25: 1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give...

And in Exodus 36 we see the result: 3 They received from Moses all the offerings the Israelites had brought to carry out the work of constructing the sanctuary. And the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning. 4 So all the skilled craftsmen who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left their work 5 and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the LORD commanded to be done." 6 Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." And so the people were restrained from bringing more, 7 because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work.

Recently I came across one of the most famous stories in fund-raising history. It occurred in the year 1912. Dr. Russell H. Conwell, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Philadelphia, had a little girl in Sunday School named Hattie May Wiatt who lived nearby. The Sunday School was very crowded, and one day Dr. Conwell told her that he would love to have buildings large enough to allow everyone to attend who wanted to.

Later, Hattie May became ill and died. Rev. Conwell was asked to preach the funeral, and the girl's mother told him that Hattie May had been saving her money to help build a bigger church. The mother gave him the little girl's purse, and it contained fifty-seven cents (which represented a large amount for a poor little girl in those days). Rev. Conwell took those coins to the bank and exchanged them for fifty-seven pennies which he put on display and "sold." With the proceeds, a nearby house was purchased and the property was converted into a children's wing for the church. Inspired by Hattie's story, more money came in, and out of her fifty-seven cents eventually came the buildings for the buildings of Temple Baptist Church in Philadelphia, Temple University, and Good Samaritan Hospital.

Someone once said, "Little is much when God is in it." The amount of our gifts isn't as important as the nature of it. Are we giving as God prompts us? Are we giving willingly? Are we giving heartily? Are we giving sacrificially? Are we giving as God prompts us? And are we promptable?

Like the Israelites, we are a group of ex-slaves, for we have been set free from the tyranny of Satan and of sin (Romans 6:17). Now, God wants to do something through us that is both crucial and incredible. He wants to extend His kingdom and advance His work on this earth. He has already given us the needed resources. It is already in our pockets, in our purses, and in our portfolios. We're

facing a great opportunity, and each of us must devote ourselves to the Lord anew, asking Him, "Lord, what would you have me do? What would you have me say? What would you have me give?"

He's building His tabernacle. He's building His church. And as we give our tithes and offerings and special gifts and sacrificial gifts, we're investing in eternity. And God Himself prompts us. May the Lord make us promptable, and then may He prompt us!