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# Exodus in the New Testament

David Lau

## Exodus Sermon #8

**Readings:** Exodus 15: 1-10 (*The Song of Moses*)

Exodus 15:11-21 (*The Song of Moses followed by the Song of Miriam*)

**Sermon Text:** Revelation 15:1-4

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.”

It certainly was a great day in Israelite history when the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, and the pursuing Egyptian army was drowned. Obviously, this great victory over the Egyptians was the Lord's victory. The Lord God is the One who had sent plague after plague on the land of Egypt, until finally the king of Egypt gave the word that Moses and the Israelites should leave the land. Of course, it was the Lord God who miraculously caused the wide path of dry ground to appear in the middle of the Red Sea, and it was the Lord God who caused the water to return and drown the pursuing armies of Pharaoh.

The Israelites recognized that their deliverance was the Lord's victory. Therefore after this great event they gave glory to God by singing His praises. Moses led the men in a mighty hymn of praise, and Miriam, Moses' sister, led the women in song and dance and praise to Jehovah. “**Sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.**”

During the distribution of the Lord's Supper in our church service, we shall sing a version of this song sung by Moses and the Israelites on the banks of the Red Sea. In so doing, we shall praise the Lord our God, not only for giving the Israelites the victory over the Egyptians, but also for giving us the victory over sin, Satan, death and hell through our Lord Jesus Christ. For as God showed His almighty power over Egypt at the Red Sea and saved the Israelites from their enslaved oppression, so He has won the victory over Satan and sin through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and has set us free from our spiritual bondage. For it is written: “**Christ Himself likewise shared in flesh and blood, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage**” (Heb. 2:14-15). And just as the Israelites were now no longer afraid of Pharaoh and his Egyptian armies, so we too, because of Christ, do not need to fear death or the condemnation of our sins, for Jesus died for our sins and rose again.

Now our text from Revelation 15 portrays to us a future scene near another sea. In this future moment we, the people of God, will sing praise to God, as the Israelites did on the shores of the Red Sea. The song we shall sing on that day is called “**THE SONG OF MOSES, the servant of God, AND THE SONG OF THE LAMB.**” This seems to be not two songs but *one song*, for the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb are the same song, sung by God's people on the Last Day, giving glory to the Lord for His mighty acts of deliverance and salvation.

The man who saw this future scene in a special vision was the apostle John, who in his old age was banished to the island of Patmos by the Roman authorities. This is where John saw many other wondrous things in visions, as the book of Revelation portrays them to us. Now at this particular point, as recorded in chapter 15, John saw “**another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.**”

Just as God poured out His ten plagues on the land of Egypt in the days of Moses, because Pharaoh stubbornly refused to obey His will, so also in our day and in the days to come the almighty Lord God is going to show His wrath and anger over human sin and rebellion by sending down severe judgments on this earth and its inhabitants. Indeed, John saw the wrath of God revealed through seven last plagues, including such things as disease, pollution, fire, famine and finally the end of the world, the last plague of all.

As we can see before our eyes, this world we live in today is not improving spiritually or morally. Murder is being committed openly and legally in the form of abortion. Sexual immorality is commonplace. Crookedness in business or politics or religious enterprises is not a rare thing. The inborn greed and lust for money, ever present in the human nature of us all, is being stirred up by state-approved lotteries and casinos. And the Word of God is ridiculed by the world and its leaders, while churches and church leaders do not find it convenient to do or defend what God says.

Surely in times such as these we can expect God in His holy wrath to unleash some of His last plagues as a warning to all to repent of their sins before the final judgment comes. How patient the Lord God was with stubborn Pharaoh, sending and removing nine plagues in an effort to change his heart and mind before He sent the last plague of death on the firstborn, which was followed by the destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea. Let us not be misled. Drought conditions in our world are from God. Storm and tempest are from God. Diseases such as AIDS are from God, even as the locusts and hail and boils came from God and troubled the Egyptians. The almighty and holy God hates sin. He wants sinners to repent and thus be delivered from His final judgment. So He sends warnings of one kind or another to lead us and all to repentance. But ultimately His hardened enemies must face the full force of His wrath on the Last Day. Who then can stand?

John saw in his vision that there were some survivors of the last plagues to come. Even as the Israelites of old survived God's plagues on the land of Egypt and praised the Lord for their deliverance, so it shall be on the Last Day too. Those who in faith take their stand with the triumphant Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, shall survive and sing His praises. Yes, John saw **“those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.”** The beast represents the forces of evil, the enemies of God and His anointed Christ. The unbelievers in this world are taken in by the lies and temptations of Satan and his allies. They fall for the arguments in favor of abortion, immorality, blasphemy, lust and greed. They want to be free from the restrictions of God's Word, not realizing that their freedom from God means slavery to Satan. But God will preserve His elect. On the Last Day there will be an Israel of God – those who have crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, those who have escaped God's plagues of wrath, those who have been saved by their trust in God's unblemished Lamb, Jesus Christ. And these victorious people will sing God's praises, just as Israel did under the direction of Moses and Miriam.

On that great day they shall sing THE SONG OF MOSES AND THE SONG OF THE LAMB: **“Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the nations! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy, for all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.”**

Admittedly, we do not always understand God's ways taking place in our world right now. Things happen that to us seem unfair and unjust. I suppose that we sometimes even complain about the way God is running things, just as Job complained bitterly when God permitted all kinds of trouble to invade his life. But the Lord led Job finally to conclude that he, Job, was a vile sinner, that only God is righteous and that no one has the right or authority to find fault with God.

Dear friends, we are all guilty of our own sins. Thus we are not worthy of God's deliverance. We are rather worthy of all His plagues and His final judgment of condemnation. But God has sent His Son Jesus to be our Umbrella and our Shield on the Day of Judgment, and Jesus truly is the One who protects us from the hailstones of God's wrath. In Jesus we have deliverance from sin, death, Satan and hell. In His Gospel Word He gives us the victory that He won for us through His own suffering and death, which paid our debt in full and brought us the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

On the Last Day even His enemies will be forced to acknowledge Jesus as Lord. But this admission will not save them from everlasting condemnation. Now is the only time for us to acknowledge the Lord in faith and glorify His name. Now is the time for us to say: Jesus, You are holy and true. I am a sinner. Forgive all of my sins for Your mercy's sake. Deliver me from the devil and all the workers of iniquity. Keep me as Your own by Your grace until that day when Your grace brings me to the shores of the “sea of glass” and I shall sing Your song and the song of Moses with all whom You have saved. Amen.

## Exodus Sermon #9

**Readings:** Exodus 16:2-15 (*God provides manna and quail in the wilderness*)  
Exodus 17:1-13 (*God provides water and victory over enemies in the wilderness*)

**Sermon Texts:** 1 Corinthians 10:1-5; John 6:31-34, 49-51, 58

**1 Corinthians 10:1-5** – Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

**John 6:31-34, 49-51, 58** – “Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.”

“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

“This is the bread which came down from heaven – not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”

I think most of us here have done plenty of complaining this past summer. We may have complained about the heat or the lack of rain. In the last week or so we’ve complained about the humidity. So I suppose we are in a position to understand somewhat and sympathize with the children of Israel in their journey through the wilderness. There were at least two million of them, led by Moses into a dry and barren land. They were essentially in a desert, where they naturally ran out of food. Where in the desert would they be able to get enough food for two million people? And they ran out of water. No surprise about that. How could they expect to find water for all those people and all their cattle out there in the desert?

No food to be found in the wilderness! So what did they do? Notice that they did not pray to God with faith in His mercy. They complained. According to the inspired record of the book of Exodus, they “**murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.**” They remembered the good old days in the land of Egypt. “**We sat by the pots of meat. ...we ate bread to the full.**” They blamed Moses and Aaron for their troubles when they said to them, “**You have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.**”

At a later time they ran out of water. What did they do with this crisis? Again, they did not pray to God with faith in His mercy. Again, they complained. “**The people murmured against Moses, and said, ‘Why is it you have brought us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?’**”

We indeed should be able to relate to the murmurings of the children of Israel, for in many ways we are just like them. Instead of taking our troubles and problems to God in prayer and trusting in His mercy, we likewise complain. And often we blame our leaders, our government, our doctors, our parents, our teachers or our church for the problems we may have.

Now we realize that it was not right for the Israelites to complain about the problems they were having in the wilderness. After all, the Lord God had just proved His love for them by setting them free from their horrible slavery in Egypt. Based on the incredible way that He did this, why should they not also trust in Him to provide for their food and their need of water too? Since the almighty Lord God had just shown His power in delivering them from the oppression of Pharaoh, could He not give them food and drink as well?

We today should also realize that we do not have a right to complain about our own circumstances. Has not our God sent His Son Jesus to be our Savior? Has Jesus not taken away our sins and forgiven us completely? Has He not washed us clean in the waters of Baptism and fed us with His body and blood in the Lord’s Supper? Has He not made us His children by giving us our faith? Has He not promised us eternal life as His free gift of

grace? In the words of the letter to the Romans: **“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”** How dare we complain, when our God has been so good to us as to save us from sin and adopt us as His own children? How dare we complain, when He promises to supply all of our needs? Should we not trust in Him to do as He has said? Complaining is certainly just as wrong for us today as it was for the Israelites in days of old.

Notice what God did when the Israelites complained about their situation. Although they did not deserve such kindness from Him, still God treated them as it is written in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Psalm: **“He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities”** (v. 10); **“He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust”** (v. 14); **“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us”** (v. 12). Our God in His mercy gave the complaining Israelites bread from heaven – yes, manna to feed them every day for the forty years they were in the desert. Moreover, He gave them quails for meat. And whenever they ran out of water, He miraculously provided water for them in the parched, deadly land in which they traveled. Recall the time when Moses struck the rock at God’s command, and the water poured out of the rock to take care of all their needs. How good the Lord God was to them, and of course, we know He has been at least that good to us!

Now we need to consider something that our two New Testament texts bring out in connection with God’s miraculous provisions for the Israelites in the wilderness. **THEY ATE BREAD FROM HEAVEN, AND YET THEY DIED. CAN THIS HAPPEN TO US TOO?**

With reference to this period of history the apostle Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians: **“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.”**

Why did God do everything that He did for the Israelites? Why did He open a path for them through the Red Sea? Why did He feed them miraculously with manna from heaven? Why did Christ, the real source of the water in the desert, supply them with the water from the rock? Obviously, God’s intention was to preserve His people and bring them into the land of Canaan He had promised to their fathers and to them. His intention was to bring them safely to this land where He would bring to pass the plan of salvation through them and their descendant Jesus. Yet how many of them actually made it to the promised land? Only two of those Israelites above the age of twenty years ever reached the destination of Canaan. As for the rest, we are told **“their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.”** They ate bread from heaven, and yet they died. They died, because in spite of God’s continued patience with them and continual blessings to them, they turned away from Him to unbelief and idolatry.

Amazing, is it not? All of them went through the Red Sea unscathed. All of them acknowledged Moses as their God-given leader. All of them ate the manna without fail. All of them drank the water from the Rock. But only two of them actually entered the land of promise.

The lesson for us is very simple, as we consider how much we have in common with the Israelites who left Egypt. We too have been delivered from an enemy. We too have been baptized in the saving waters of Baptism that Christ Himself instituted. We have been given the privilege of receiving Christ’s own body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. We have received spiritual blessings in great number from our gracious Lord and Savior, who has set us free from our slavery to Satan and sin and has promised us eternal life, our own entrance into the promised land of heaven. Does this necessarily mean that all of us who have been baptized are going to heaven? Does it mean that all those who partake of the Lord’s Supper on earth are going to enjoy the wedding supper of the Lamb in the life to come? It was not that way for the Israelites. Though they all went through the Red Sea, though they all ate manna and drank water from the rock, only Joshua and Caleb reached the promised land of Canaan.

As we look back at the baptism records of our congregation or the communion records of our members, we can see already now that some have drifted away. Perhaps they can yet be reclaimed, but as of now they seem to have fallen away. Our Lord Jesus never said, “He who is baptized shall be saved,” but “He who *believes and is baptized* shall be saved.” Baptism should not be regarded or relied on as an automatic ticket to heaven. With the exception of two, all the Israelites who went through the Red Sea did not reach the promised land. **“Their bodies were scattered in the wilderness,”** even as many of those baptized in Christian churches are scattered

here and there in the wilderness of life, drifting away as lost souls who will not go to be with their Lord if they are still in unbelief when they die.

What is the solution to this problem of persons falling away and dropping out, in spite of them having contact at one time with God's Word and the Sacraments? Let us listen to Jesus in our text from the Gospel of John. He said to the Jews around Him: **"Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven – not as the fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever."**

You see, Jesus Himself is the true Bread from heaven, the true Bread of life. He gave His flesh and poured out His blood for the life of the world, that is, for all people, when He suffered and died on the cross. But only those who eat Him will live, and live forever. How can we eat Christ? The answer is what Jesus plainly said: **"He who believes in Me has everlasting life"** (John 6:47). The connection of faith has to be there. Otherwise, the benefit of the gift is lost. **"He who does not believe will be condemned,"** even if he is baptized and partakes of the Lord's Supper. But **"he that believes and is baptized shall be saved."** Again it is written: **"The word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it"** (Heb. 4:2). The Israelites did not enter the Promised Land because of unbelief. But **"we who have believed do enter that rest"** (Heb. 4:3).

The Israelites ate manna from heaven, and they died. Can something like this happen to us too? Can we participate in an outward way in all of God's spiritual blessings and still fail to enter the promised land yet to come? Of course, we can. It happens all the time. But this is not God's intention for any one of us, nor is it our aim as a Christian congregation seeking to carry out the Lord's mission of saving the lost. We proclaim Jesus Christ crucified and risen as the only Bread of life, the Savior of the world. We administer the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as the very means by which God offers and conveys the blessings of Christ to those who receive and make use of them. We pray that our Lord will work faith and strengthen faith through these means which He Himself has provided. For the Spirit gives and sustains spiritual life, that is, faith through His Gospel in Word and Sacraments. May God so work in our hearts through His means of grace, so that the complaining we do does not become unbelief, but rather that our faith in Jesus Christ may endure, increase and produce fruit which remains to eternal life. Amen.

### Exodus Sermon #10

**Readings: Exodus 19: 1-13 (*Jehovah brings His people to Mount Sinai*)  
Exodus 19:14-25 (*The people cannot see the LORD directly and live*)**

**Sermon Text: Hebrews 12:18-25a**

**For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow." And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.") But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you do not refuse Him who speaks.**

With the beginning of a new school year, it is important for us to remember why our congregation operates a Christian day school and why our church body operates a Christian high school, college and seminary. There is one main reason for the operation of these schools, and that is to teach the Word of God to our young people. We cannot expect schools operated and controlled by government agencies to teach the Word of God. It is not their place or calling from God to do that. And we live in a pluralistic society, where many different religions and worldviews are competing with each other. There is no agreement in the world or in our own

country as to who God is or what His Word is. Therefore, if government-controlled schools should attempt to teach the Word of God to students, all we could expect to happen is the creation of confusion. By the Lord's own decree we who have learned to know the one true God through Jesus Christ have the responsibility to teach the true Word of the true God to our children and to anyone else who wants to learn about Him. It is for this reason that we have Christian schools. We thank our Lord for the freedom we have in this nation to operate our own schools and teach the Word of God, as we understand it, to our students. We pray that our Lord will continue to give us this tremendous opportunity for Christian education, even though we continue to be unworthy of it.

Let us now consider the details of what we are actually going to teach. The Word of God, you say. But what exactly is that Word of God? What has God declared to us? Our text indicates, along with the rest of Scripture, that God has two main things to lay before us and impress on our hearts. He speaks Law, and He speaks Gospel. He speaks OLD COVENANT, and He speaks NEW COVENANT.

The old covenant is found in the books written by Moses, particularly Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. God Himself first spoke the words of the old covenant to the children of Israel, as they were camping around Mt. Sinai. We notice how **THE OLD COVENANT TERRIFIED MOSES AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL**. It was God's intention to make them realize the greatness, the power and the holiness of the LORD God, their God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Jehovah, the only God, the invisible Spirit, spoke aloud from Mt. Sinai. Later on, Moses recalled that day by saying: **"The Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice"** (Deut. 4:12).

This was something very special in the history of the world. The almighty LORD God actually talked to people on earth in human words. Moses wanted the Israelites to understand what a tremendous thing this was. So he said, **"Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live? . . . To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself is God; there is none other besides Him. Out of heaven He let you hear His voice, that He might instruct you; on earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire"** (Deut. 4:33, 35-36).

What an awe-filled day that must have been! Mount Sinai was declared off limits to man and beast. Any animal or human that ventured near the holy mountain was to be stoned to death or shot with an arrow. Imagine the steady sound of thunder booming, the sky filled with lightning, a thick cloud over the mountain side, with smoke, fire and an earthquake! There was the sound of a trumpet, and above all else, there was the voice of the almighty God speaking to them: **"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. . . . I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God"** (Exod. 20:2-3, 5). Then God spoke the words we know as the Ten Commandments.

Notice the reaction of the Israelites when God spoke His Word to them. **"They trembled and stood afar off,"** the Bible says. **"All the people who were in the camp trembled,"** including Moses, who said, **"I am exceedingly afraid, and trembling."** It was a terrifying sight and a terrifying sound. In their fright the people said to Moses, **"Let not God speak with us, lest we die."** Because they were sinners, the Israelites felt this way about hearing the word of God directly from Him. Deep down, they knew that He was holy and they were sinful. So they were terrified by His presence and His voice, and even Moses was afraid.

What about us? Does not God's thunder-clap in a storm put some fear into our hearts? What if this great God were to speak from heaven to you and me in our own language and declare to us His commandments, and then say to us: "You must obey these commandments of Mine; otherwise, you shall die." These are the very terms of the old covenant, dear friends. This is the full extent and force of God's Law: it exposes our sins and our sinfulness, it condemns and curses us for our disobedience, and it scares us to death, because we know we are guilty.

Thanks be to God, however, that this old covenant is not God's final Word on the matter of our sin and our guilt. The Law is God's Word, to be sure, but it is not His last Word. The old covenant is followed by the new covenant, which spells out what God had always intended to do. **THE NEW COVENANT IS JESUS**, with all His many blessings. From the days of Adam and Eve God had already promised this new covenant, and the giving of the old covenant as the Ten Commandments did not nullify God's promise. What God spoke to His people at Mt. Sinai and through Moses was His Word. It was His Law. But His last and better Word would be the word He has spoken through Jesus Christ. **"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"** (John 1:17).

The sad thing is that when God spoke His Word in Jesus Christ, there were those who did not listen. There were some who preferred to live under the old covenant of Law instead of rejoicing in the good news of

Jesus Christ, the new covenant of God's grace and forgiveness. The letter to the Hebrews, from which our text is taken, was written particularly to such people who were facing the delusion of preferring the old covenant to the new.

Therefore the inspired writer was led by the Holy Spirit to compare the old covenant with the new covenant and point out the absolute superiority of the new covenant and its Mediator, Jesus Christ. He has written to them and to us: **"You have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: 'And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or thrust through with an arrow.' And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, 'I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.')** But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel."

How can anyone prefer the old covenant to the new? The old covenant is nothing but Law, which only condemns and terrifies sinners like you and me. The new covenant is Gospel, Good News for us. Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant, even as Moses was the mediator of the old covenant. In fact, the perfect Jesus did what the sinner Moses could never do. He fulfilled the conditional terms of the old covenant and replaced it with unconditional terms of the new covenant. In particular, Jesus poured out His own holy, precious blood as a perfect, atoning sacrifice for the sins of all people. Yes, this blood of Jesus **"speaks better things than that of Abel."** Abel was murdered by his brother Cain, and his blood cried out from the ground for vengeance and punishment. Jesus' blood does not cry out for vengeance, but rather obtains and declares God's complete forgiveness, since He suffered and died in the place of all sinners and satisfied for them the justice God required of them. The new covenant is the forgiveness of sins freely given to us and to all in Jesus Christ. Thus we see that when the Law shows us our sin, it is the Gospel which shows us our Savior.

When God brings us to faith in Jesus through His Gospel Word, then we are partakers of His new covenant. We are made participants and partners with God in that most wonderful assembly that we know as God's Church. We are not at Mt. Sinai anymore; we are on Mt. Zion. We are in the city of God. We have joined the holy angels. We have become citizens of heaven. We are in the same family with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the believers in God's promise who died as believers before us. Yes, God is still Judge, and we must face Him, but we do not need to be afraid of Him. For in Jesus we have forgiveness, and in Jesus the almighty God becomes our dear Father, to whom we have full access in all of our needs.

The Word of God: what a precious thing it is! While the old covenant was truly glorious, the new covenant is even more wonderful, for it is to us the covenant of life, not death. With that perspective we hear and heed the call: **"See that you do not refuse Him who speaks."** Knowing that the Word of God is precious and eternally vital, let us ask God to help us see its value, so that we make use of the many means available to listen to His Word. May God move us to and bless us in reading the Bible in our own private study, and also as we join others in family devotions, church services, Christian schools, Sunday School and Bible Class. **"See that you do not refuse Him who speaks,"** for the One who speaks is your holy, gracious, faithful God. May we say with the young boy Samuel, **"Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears."** Amen.

### Exodus Sermon #11

**Readings:** Exodus 20: 1-11 (*The first table of God's Law*)  
Exodus 20:12-23 (*The second table of God's Law*)

**Sermon Texts:** Galatians 3:10-14, 19-22; Romans 3:19-20

Galatians 3:10-14, 19-22 – For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, **"Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."** But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for **"the just shall live by faith."** Yet the law is not of faith, but **"the man who does them shall live by them."** Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, **"Cursed is everyone who hangs**

on a tree”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

**Romans 3:19-20 – Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

The Lord God Himself spoke the words we know as the Ten Commandments. He spoke them from the fire and smoke on Mt. Sinai to the children of Israel under the leadership of Moses. The account in Exodus does not mention the presence of angels when the Law was given, but Moses wrote in the book of Deuteronomy: **“The Lord came from Sinai, . . . and He came with ten thousands of holy ones; from His right hand came a fiery law for them”** (Deut. 33:2). Later on, God Himself wrote the words of His law on two tablets of stone, and these two stone tablets were preserved in the Ark of the Covenant and housed in the tabernacle for many, many years.

Today we want to consider why God gave the Ten Commandments to His people, why they are printed in our Bibles and catechisms, and why we still learn them today and teach them to our children. First of all, let us remember how God introduced His commandments. He said, **“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”** As He spoke these words, there must have been Israelites who in their hearts appreciated what their God had done for them, and they truly loved Him. The Ten Commandments gave these Israelites who loved their Lord a standard or rule by which they could know how to show their love for Him. For God indeed wanted them to love Him and obey His commandments willingly. After Moses died, the Lord told Joshua, Moses’ successor, to follow this law of God: **“Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left.”** The Law thus has served as a standard for the Christian’s righteous conduct, even as it still does today. In our Lutheran confessions we speak of this as the third use of the law.

The account in Exodus indicates another use or purpose for God’s Law. When the people said to Moses, **“Let not God speak with us, lest we die,”** Moses responded, **“God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.”** The Lord God showed His glory to His people when He gave them His Law, so that they would be afraid to transgress His commandments. This result would hold true for all, not only for those who loved Him among the people, but also for those who hated Him. Some of them would be afraid to sin, at least in some ways, because of the threat of being punished by such a great and powerful God. In our Lutheran confessions this is called the first use of the law. As our catechism states, the Law functions in this way “as a curb” to “check to some extent the coarse outbreak of sin” in the world.

Now we have not yet considered THE MAIN PURPOSE OF GOD’S LAW, which is clearly revealed by our texts from the apostle Paul in his letters to the Galatians and the Romans. This a very important subject, for if we do not know the main purpose of God’s Law, we may very well face eternal condemnation in hell because we got it wrong!

Permit a few examples from my own ministry. In a manual I sometimes use for adult instruction there is a statement made about the Law of God that leaves two words blank for the student to fill in. The desired answer is this: I have not kept God’s commandments. Therefore I deserve punishment. One of my students once wrote in the blanks: I have always kept God’s commandments. Therefore I deserve a reward. Apparently, this was what this person believed in her heart. She believed that the main purpose of God’s Law was to give her a way by which she could earn a reward, yes, the reward of eternal life. There was another woman who had been a regular churchgoer in a church of another denomination for many years. She had attended Sunday School and participated actively in church affairs. When I discussed the Commandments with her, she told me honestly that she had always believed that the way to get to heaven was by keeping the Ten Commandments. She was not so sure she had always kept them, but she did not know any other way by which she could be saved.

In both of these cases I made use of God’s Law and our two New Testament texts to make it clear and without a doubt that God’s Law was not given as a way of salvation. The apostle Paul says in Galatians: **“As**

**many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’”**

Do we fully understand what he is saying? Anyone who thinks that he will get to heaven by keeping the commandments of God is under God’s curse. In other words, he is on his way to hell rather than to heaven. This is truly so, because God’s Law demands perfect obedience. There is nothing wrong with God’s Law in any way; there is nothing wrong with its requirement of absolute perfection, nothing wrong with its specific commandments, nothing wrong with its reward for perfect obedience and nothing wrong with its punishment for any disobedience. Jesus Himself said concerning the Law, **“This do, and you shall live.”** But the fact is that we don’t do the Law; we don’t keep the commandments, and therefore we cannot live by any attempt on our part to obey what the Law requires.

Paul says again in Galatians: **“For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin.”** There is no Law better than God’s Law. If you keep God’s Law as He wants it kept, you will be saved from judgment and death. But understand this. It is not enough that you know the commandments; you have to do them. It is not enough that you do some of the things in the Law; you have to do all of them. It is not enough that you do all of the things once in a while; you have to continue in all things, to do them at all times. And God ultimately says: **“Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”** Anyone who blunders just once is under God’s curse and faces the condemnation of hell.

God cannot say it any more plainly. **“No one is justified by the law in the sight of God.”** And again: **“By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight.”** The two women in my instruction classes who considered their supposed obedience to God’s commandments as the way to life were at that moment in their lives on the road that leads to eternal destruction.

So what is THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE LAW? It is certainly not that we might keep the commandments and be justified thereby or earn eternal life for ourselves. Because we are sinners, this way of salvation is not open for us. Only Jesus was pure enough in His life on earth to keep God’s commandments and deserve the reward of eternal life for perfect obedience.

THE MAIN PURPOSE OF GOD’S LAW, therefore, is what the apostle Paul says: **“By the law is the knowledge of sin.”** And again: **“Whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”** The main purpose of God’s Law is to show us our sin. The Law plugs up our bragging mouths and convinces us that we are guilty. Every one of us is guilty before God, because we have not obeyed God’s Law and we cannot obey it perfectly. Our Lutheran confessions repeat the Latin phrase, *“Lex semper accusat,”* which means, “The Law always accuses.” Yes, that is its chief function, which our confessions call the second use of the Law. When we compare ourselves, our thoughts, words and deeds to God’s demands in His commandments, we are accused. Yes, we Christians are accused. We stand guilty before God, together with every other human being in the whole world. **“What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions.”** The Law serves to accuse us of sin and expose our guilt when we are inclined to justify ourselves. The Law curses us for our disobedience and does not allow us to open our mouths in our own defense.

So what good is that? What is the way of salvation, if it is not God’s Law? Well, the Law prepares the way for the Gospel to be the answer, pointing to Jesus as the way, as this text so wonderfully tells us: **“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.’”** Christ is the only one who deserved a reward for keeping the Law. And yet it is Jesus who in our place took our curse on the cross, being punished there for all our sins, so that through His atonement we may get out from under that horrible curse for our transgressions. Jesus is God’s way of salvation, God’s *only* way of salvation for all. **“The Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”** God wants us to trust, not in ourselves, but in Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Savior.

During the distribution of the Lord’s Supper today we shall be singing Martin Luther’s hymn on the Ten Commandments. At the end of every stanza, as it reminds us of another commandment we have broken, we pray, “Have mercy, Lord!” Yes, have mercy because we have disobeyed each of Your commandments.

“God these commandments gave therein  
To show thee, child of man, thy sin . . . .”

“Help us, Lord Jesus Christ, for we  
A Mediator have in Thee.  
Our works cannot salvation gain;  
They merit but endless pain.  
Have mercy, Lord! Amen” (TLH 287:11a, 12).

(To be continued)

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## Exegesis of Genesis 49:1-12

Paul Naumann

### Translation

1. *Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, “Assemble yourselves  
That I may tell you what shall befall you in the days to come.*
2. *Gather together and listen, sons of Jacob;  
Listen to Israel your father.*
3. *Reuben, you are my firstborn, my strength,  
The firstling of my might,  
Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.*
4. *Unstable as water, you will not have preeminence,  
For you went up to your father's bed,  
Then proceeded to defile it  
(to my couch he went up!).*
5. *Simeon and Levi are brothers;  
Their swords are tools of violence.*
6. *Let not my soul enter into their council;  
Let not my dignity be united with their assembly.  
For in their anger they killed men;  
They hamstringed oxen for their pleasure.*
7. *Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce  
And their fury, for it was cruel.  
I will disperse them in Jacob,  
And I will scatter them in Israel.*
8. *Judah, it is you!  
It is you whom your brothers shall praise.  
Your hand is upon the neck of your enemies;  
Your father's sons shall bow down before you.*
9. *A lion's cub is Judah;  
You have arisen from the prey, my son.  
He crouches, he lies down like a lion,  
And - like a lion - who dares wake him up?*
10. *The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet  
Until SHILOH comes;  
To Him will belong the obedience of nations.*
11. *He tethers his colt to the vine,  
And the foal of his donkey to the choice vine;  
He washes his garment in wine,  
His clothing in the blood of grapes.*

12. *His eyes are darker than wine,  
His teeth whiter than milk.*

### Overview

The great patriarch Jacob was dying. The Lord had reunited him with his son Joseph in Egypt, and he had seen his family blessed with abundance in the land of Goshen. Now, as the time approached when he would be gathered to his fathers, Jacob called together his offspring to bless them. In Genesis 48:8-12 we first hear him bless Ephraim and Manasseh, the two grandsons (by Joseph) with whom he had only recently become acquainted. In chapter 49 we hear his final, prophetic blessing upon his twelve sons, with verses 1-12 covering the benedictions spoken to his first four sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah. These four, along with Issachar and Zebulun, were children of Jacob's first wife Leah.

The blessing is in poetic form. As is common in Old Testament poetry, the Hebrew is difficult, with many hapax legomena. Much of the vocabulary is obscure, and the syntax often puzzling. In addition, this passage includes the much-discussed reference to “Shiloh,” which one writer called “the most famous crux interpretum in the entire Old Testament.”<sup>1</sup> It was primarily to come to an understanding of this verse – or at least to survey the difficulties of this verse – that this section was contemplated. It will be good to bear in mind, as we consider Jacob's eloquent words, that his prophecy has as much or more to do with the *descendants* of each son as it does with the sons themselves. This will be especially important when we reach the blessing of Judah.

From a *WLO* sermon study by Prof. Richard Balge: “These words are part of the prophetic blessing which the dying Jacob spoke to his son Judah. As he addressed his twelve sons he reserved the highest promise for this son. Not the eldest or the youngest, not the prime minister of Egypt or the father of the priestly tribe, but Judah. Jacob spoke in the Spirit to the son whose descendants would play a special role in Israel's history and whose Descendant would effect the salvation which God was preparing for all nations.”<sup>2</sup>

### Verses One and Two

1 וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאֵסְפוּ וְאֵנִידָה לָּכֶם  
אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֲתֶכֶם בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים:  
2 הִקְבְּצוּ וּשְׁמְעוּ בְנֵי יַעֲקֹב וּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִיכֶם:

1. Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, “Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what shall befall you in the days to come.
2. Gather together and listen, sons of Jacob; Listen to Israel your father.

Niph impv masc pl; <i>gather; remove, gather in</i>	הֵאָסְפוּ [אָסַף]
Hiph impf 1 c sing cohort; <i>relate, tell</i>	וְאֵנִידָה [נִגַּד]
Qal impf 3 m sing; <i>happen, befall</i>	יִקְרָא [קָרָא 2]
Niph impv masc pl; <i>gather; assemble</i>	הִקְבְּצוּ [קָבַץ]

**Notes:** It sometimes happens in Hebrew that a tri-literal verb stem may have two (in rare instances, three or more) different and unrelated meanings. Here we have a good example, where the two different meanings of the stem קרא are displayed in the same verse. In the first colon it means “call,” and in the final colon we find the rarer meaning, “happen or befall” (cf. Job 4:14, Gen. 42:4.)

In our modern culture a blessing is not taken very seriously. Every sneeze is followed inevitably by a blessing, even spoken by people who aren't believers. We who are Christians may speak many blessings upon our children in the course of a single day and think very little of it. It was not so in ancient Israel. There the father's blessing upon his children was taken very seriously indeed; witness the earlier conflict between Jacob and his brother Esau for the blessing of their father Isaac. The patriarchal blessing was only spoken once, and was considered a paramount factor in determining the future of the person blessed.

The verb שמע routinely means “listen to, hear.” In certain contexts, however, it can have the meaning

“obey” (cf. Exod. 24:7; Gen. 27:8). The sons of Israel were rather notorious for their disobedience so far. Here is a case where finally the sons would listen to the words of their father and obey. Their lives would conform to his prophecy, whether they liked it or not.

### Verses Three and Four

3 רְאוּבֵן בְּכֹרִי אַתָּה כַּחַי וְרֵאשִׁית אוֹנִי יָתֵר שְׂאֵת וַיִּתֵּר עָז:  
 4 פָּחַז כַּמַּיִם אֶל־תּוֹתֵר כִּי עָלִיתָ מִשְׁכְּבִי אֲבִיךָ אִז חָלַלְתָּ  
 יְצוּעֵי עֹלָה:

3. Reuben, you are my firstborn, my strength, the firstling of my might, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.  
 4. Unstable as water, you will not have preeminence, for you went up to your father's bed, then proceeded to defile it (to my couch he went up!)

Noun fem sing abs; <i>chief, best; first-fruits, firstling</i>	וְרֵאשִׁית [ר אש]
Noun masc sing constr + 1 c sing pron suff; <i>strength, power; wealth</i>	אוֹנִי [און]
Noun masc sing; <i>remainder, rest; preference, excellence, cf. Prov. 17:7</i>	יָתֵר
Noun fem sing; <i>lifting up; rising, scab; exaltation, majesty, dignity; cf. Hab. 1:7, Job 13:11</i>	שְׂאֵת
Noun masc sing; <i>hastiness, instability; here as adj: unstable, cf. Judg. 9:4, Zeph. 3:4</i>	פָּחַז
Hiph impf 2 masc sing; <i>let remain, leave, spare; have more than enough; excel, have preference over</i>	תּוֹתֵר [תר]
Piel perf 2 mas sing; <i>profane, defile, pollute</i>	חָלַלְתָּ [חלל]
Noun masc sing constr + 1 c sing suff; <i>bed, couch</i>	יְצוּעֵי [יצוע]

**Notes:** Speiser (Anchor Bible) says that the personal pronoun in the first clause is appositive rather than predicative; render “You, Reuben, my first born” rather than “Reuben, you are my firstborn,” which, he says, states the obvious.

The word יָתֵר usually means “remainder, rest” and here has the connotation of “what is preferred, select, excellent.” As the firstborn Reuben would by rights be the preferred son of the twelve. He constituted the first evidence of Israel's manly vigor, and from birth Reuben must have given promise of being preeminent in dignity and power. But the natural order of things would not be in this case. With one wicked act Reuben would sacrifice his father's favor and his preeminence among the brothers.

For Reuben Jacob's prophecy contains a poignant irony: where there should have been preeminence, there would be servitude; instead of exaltation, he would have humiliation. All because of Reuben's notorious transgression against his father and against the commandment of the Lord. Genesis 35 records the incident referred to, when Reuben had sexual relations with Bilhah, one of Jacob's concubines. With this vile transgression, Jacob says, Reuben has revealed his unreliable nature and forfeited his birthright.

The last two words of verse four are problematic. “My couch” complements “my bed” in the first hemistich, but why a third person: *to my couch he went up?* LXX (witnessed by the Syriac and a couple of the Targums) has second person, ἀνέβης, “you went up,” but this is hardly convincing enough to emend the Masoretic Text. It is more likely that Jacob was provoked to outrage at the recollection of the offense – enough so to prompt a heated exclamation, “To MY COUCH he went up!”

## Verses Five through Seven

5 שְׁמַעוֹן וְלֵוִי אֲחִים כָּלֵי חַמָּס מְכַרְתֵּיהֶם:  
 6 בְּסָדֶם אֶל־תְּבֹא נַפְשִׁי בְּקִהְלָם אֶל־תִּחַד כְּבֹדִי כִּי  
 בְּאַפָּם הָרְגוּ אִישׁ וּבְרִצָּנָם עָקְרוּ־שׂוֹר:  
 7 אָרוּר אַפָּם כִּי עָז וְעִבְרָתָם כִּי קִשְׁתָּהּ אֶחְלָקֶם בֵּיעָקֵב  
 וְאַפְיָצֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:

5. *Simeon and Levi are brothers;  
 Their swords are tools of violence.*  
 6. *Let not my soul enter into their council;  
 Let not my dignity be united with their assembly.  
 For in their anger they killed men;  
 They hamstringed oxen for their pleasure.*  
 7. *Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce  
 And their fury, for it was cruel.  
 I will disperse them in Jacob,  
 And I will scatter them in Israel.*

Noun, m pl const, <i>vessel; implement, weapon</i>	כָּלֵי י [כְּ.לֵ.י]
Noun m s; <i>violence, oppression, wrong, cruelty</i>	חַמָּס
Noun f pl const + 3 m pl suff; <i>sword</i>	מְכַרְתֵּיהֶם [מְ.כַ.רְתֵ.הָ]
Noun m s + pref <i>beth</i> + 3 m pl suff; <i>consultation, council; assembly</i> ; cf. Jer. 6:11.	בְּסָדֶם [סָדֵם]
Qal impf 3 f sing; <i>be united, become one</i>	תִּחַד [חַד]
Qal perf 3 pl; <i>kill, murder, slay</i>	הָרְגוּ [רַג]
Noun m s + <i>waw</i> conj + pref. <i>beth</i> + 3 pl suff; <i>pleasure, delight, favor</i> (with connotations of will or self-will, cf. Dan. 8:4)	וּבְרִצָּנָם [רְ.צִוְן]
Piel perf 3 c pl; <i>pluck up, root out</i> ; in Piel: <i>lame, hamstring</i> ; cf. Josh. 11:6	עָקְרוּ [עַקַר]
Qal pass part masc sing; <i>curse, execrate</i>	אָרוּר [אָרַר]
Adj m s; <i>strong; violent, fierce, cruel</i>	עָז [עֵ.ז]
Noun f s + pref <i>waw</i> + 3 m pl suff; <i>outburst, rage; fury wrath</i>	וְעִבְרָתָם [עִ.בְ.רְתֵ.הָ]
Qal perf 3 f s; <i>be severe, cruel</i>	קִשְׁתָּהּ [קִשָּׁה]
Piel impf 1 c s + 3 pl suff; <i>divide, disperse</i>	אֶחְלָקֶם [חַלַק]
Hiph impf 1 s + <i>waw</i> conj + 3 pl suff; <i>scatte</i>	וְאַפְיָצֶם [פּוּצַ]

**Notes:** The final word in verse five, rendered *their swords*, is a hapax. In addition, there seems to be some confusion as to whether this word is the subject or object of the clause. Ibn Ezra related this word to the verb **מָכַר**, “to sell,” and rendered “their pacts (or covenants) are instruments of violence.” Still others (KJV, NKJV among them) trace it to **מְכוּרָה**, “habitation.” The rest of the popular translations, however, render “their swords,” and this seems to be the most natural. Curious, by the way, is the assonance between the Hebrew **מְכוּרָה**, *sword*, and the Greek μάχαιρα.

Jacob accused his second and third sons, Simeon and Levi, of wanton violence. As in the case of

Reuben, this accusation had as its historical antecedent a notorious incident, as will be seen.

Commentators have puzzled over both halves of verse six. In the first half Jacob admonished himself against keeping counsel with these violent men. He was so appalled by the behavior of Simeon and Levi that he refused to allow his dignity to lend legitimacy to their violent actions. Since נָפֶשׁ, “soul,” can be feminine, both verbs are feminine (the second by attraction, even though “dignity” is masculine). Note the jussive 3rd person feminine forms, with the negative particle אַל־. Also, “man” and “ox” are both nouns where a singular form may have a collective sense, as here: “killed **men** . . . hamstrung **oxen**.”

To what event does verse six refer? Jacob alludes to the infamous incident of Dinah and Shechem. After the Canaanite Shechem had violated their sister Dinah, he subsequently requested her hand in marriage. As terms the brothers demanded that all the men of the town be circumcised. *Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males. And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out* (Gen. 34:25-26). This chapter also records the plunder of the village and the taking of the livestock. Evidently, the wantonness of the brothers also showed in the fact that they hamstrung a number of cattle, cruelly cutting their Achilles tendons so as to render them permanently crippled, without killing them. Cf. Joshua 11:6 and 2 Samuel 8:4. This they evidently did for sheer pleasure.

A rare passive participle begins verse seven. Since there are no other verbs in the first hemistich, the action is predicative. But do we render “it *is* fierce,” or “it *was* fierce”? Only KJV and NKJV among the popular translations have “was,” but I agree with them. Jacob seems to continue his allusion in this verse to the terrible Dinah/Shechem event. As a consequence of their immoderate cruelty their father pronounced a curse upon Simeon and Levi. He prophesied that their descendants would be scattered in Israel, with no proper territory of inheritance as their brethren would have. This prophecy was, of course, fulfilled. In Simeon's case his tribe had become the least of all the tribes by the time of Moses' second numbering (Num. 26:14). When the land was divided, Simeon's tribe received no separate assignment of territory as an inheritance, but merely a number of cities within the confines of Judah (Josh. 19:1-9).

In Levi's case his scattering was later changed into a blessing. The Levites too received no separate inheritance, but only a number of cities to live in. But this tribe was later elected to the priesthood of Israel, thus restored to a measure of honor. One author made an important point about this prophecy concerning Levi: no intimation whatever is here given about the priesthood of the Levites. This disproves the thesis of the higher critical scholars who have tried to date this section of Genesis to the post-exilic period. If that were so, then allusion to the priesthood of the Levites would certainly have been included.

### Verses Eight and Nine

8 יְהוּדָה אַתָּה יִדְוֶה אֶחָיִךְ יָדְךָ בְּעַרְףְּ אִיבִיךָ  
יִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְךָ בְּנֵי אָבִיךָ:

9 גֹּר אַרְיֵה יְהוּדָה מִטֶּרֶף בְּנֵי עֲלִיתָ כָּרַע רֶבֶץ כְּאַרְיֵה  
וּכְלָבִיא מִי יִקְיָמוּנוּ:

8. *Judah, it is you!*

*It is you whom your brothers shall praise.  
Your hand is upon the neck of your enemies;  
Your father's sons shall bow down before you.*

9. *A lion's cub is Judah;*

*You have arisen from the prey, my son.  
He crouches, he lies down like a lion,  
And - like a lion - who dares wake him up?*

Hiph impf 3 m pl + 2 m s suff; *give thanks; praise;*  
*confess*

יִדְוֶה [קדה]

Hishtaphel impf 3 pl m; <i>bow down, prostrate</i> <i>one's self</i>	יִשְׁתַּחֲוּ וּבְיָמֵיהֶם [שׁוּדָה]
Noun m s const; <i>young animal, whelp</i>	גֹּדֵד
Noun m s + pref <i>min</i> ; <i>green leaf; prey</i> ; cf. Nah. 2:13.	מִטְרֵף טְרֵף [רֵף]
Qal perf 3 m s; <i>lie down, crouch</i>	כָּרַע
Qal perf 3 m s; <i>lie down</i>	רָבַץ
Noun m s + pref prep <i>kaph</i> + pref <i>waw</i> ; <i>lion, lioness</i>	וּכְלָבִיא
Hiph impf 3 m s + 3 m s suff; Hiph: <i>rouse up, raise</i>	יִקְוּ מִנִּי [קוּם]

**Notes:** Gesenius remarks on the first clause of verse eight that special emphasis is sometimes given to a verbal suffix by a preceding pronoun: not “*Judah, it is you whom . . .*,” but rather “*Judah you, you your brothers shall praise!*” Jacob has been running down the list of his sons: Reuben has lost his natural primacy through his sin, and Simeon and Levi have been disqualified because of their cruelty. Now Jacob has identified the one son who would receive ascendancy.

Having one's hand or foot upon the neck of the enemy was symbolic of superiority and control, and the last clause of verse eight leaves no doubt as to the final (if not immediate) primacy of the tribe of Judah. Overtones of the Messianic promise can be heard already in this verse.

There is a poetic assonance between the name “Judah” and the word יוֹדוּךָ (“they shall praise you”), possibly the result of deriving from the same root. Cf. Genesis 29:35. יִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ is an example of a rare binyan, the *Hithpolel* (or “*Hishtaphel*”). It also has strange pointing, with the last radical doubled and both containing *daghesh*. Leningradensis, as well as many other manuscripts and editions, has *daghesh* only in the last *waw*.

In verse nine the tribe of Judah is pictured with the strength and vigor of a young lion, surfeited after feeding on his prey, supremely confident even in his recumbence. His power is great, and intruders disturb him at their peril.

What could warrant this glowing description of power and domination? Judah, after all, did not gain real ascendancy over the other tribes until David and the united kingdom. Before that they were merely another of the twelve tribes. Even then, the hegemony was only over the Jews; it did not involve the rest of the “nations” (v. 10). Also, this rule under kings David and Solomon would last only two generations.

Clearly, there is a broader scope to this prophecy. Can we miss the Messianic tone in this passage? Is it possible that the following reference to “Judah” and a “lion” in the Revelation of St. John is just coincidence? *But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals”* (Rev. 5:5). The conclusion is unavoidable that the Genesis passage must have reference to the power and primacy of the coming Christ. If any doubts linger concerning the Messianic nature of this section, surely they cannot survive the verse that follows.

### Verse Ten

10 לֹא יִסּוּר שִׁבְטֵי מִיְהוּדָה וּמַחְקֵק מִבֵּין רַגְלָיו עַד  
כִּי יָבֹא שִׁילֹה וְלוֹ יִקְהַת עַמִּים:

10. *The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet  
Until SHILOH comes;  
To Him will belong the obedience of nations.*

Qal impf 3 m s; <i>turn away, depart; withdraw from</i>	יִסּוּר [סוּר]
Noun m s; <i>rod, staff; scepter</i>	שִׁבְט
Poel act part m s; <i>law-giver; ruler's staff, scepter</i>	וּמַחְקֵק [חָק]
Noun f s const; <i>obedience</i> , cf. Prov. 30:17	יִקְהַת [יִקְהַת]

**Notes:** The patriarch has just been describing in prophetic terms the ascendancy of Judah. The language of the passage indicates that some sort of primacy, symbolized by the scepter (which was traditionally held in the king's right hand as he sat on the throne, with the base resting between his feet), would remain with Judah's tribe until the point in time specified and beyond. That this ascendancy meant a perpetual, outward, political rulership by some descendant of the line of Judah could not be what was meant. It simply isn't borne out by history. The prophecy does reveal, however, that a certain primacy – at times political, at times spiritual only – would continually obtain in Judah “until Shiloh comes.”

The major *crux interpretum* of this section is the meaning of the word rendered “Shiloh” by most major translations. The word with this particular spelling is obscure. Is it a proper name? If so, does it refer to a city or a person? Might it perhaps be a noun, or some sort of verbal form? Is this section indeed messianic? The answer to the latter question hinges on how this particular word is to be understood. I'll present several of the most popular possibilities, ending with the one I'm convinced is correct.

**1) “The scepter shall not depart . . . until he (Judah) comes (to) (the town of) Shiloh.”** This rendering is held by most expositors, including Delitzsch, Lindblom and Eissfeldt. None of the modern translations have this rendering, though, except in the margin. In favor of this rendering is the fact that it retains the Masoretic text just as it appears, with no emendation. Also, every other time this word appears in the Old Testament, it refers to the **town** of Shiloh, about thirty miles north of Jerusalem, which became the home of the tabernacle during the period of the Judges. Against this rendering is the fact that there is no preposition “**to**” in the text. Also, the prophecy doesn't really come true; that is, Judah came to Shiloh with the rest of the tribes after the conquest (Josh. 18:1), but that certainly does not fulfill this prophecy. In addition, Judah had no political supremacy at that time, and Shiloh had ceased to have any religious significance by the time Judah did achieve supremacy. For the same reason the “*obedience of the nations*” clause wouldn't apply very well. Besides, the town of Shiloh was in the territory of Ephraim, not Judah.

**2) “The scepter shall not depart from Judah . . . until tribute comes to him.”** This rendering is put forward by the Talmudic Midrash (AD 1200s), commentators Ehrlich, Tur-Sinai, Moran, Cross, Freedman and Speiser. No modern versions have this rendering, which assumes the following emendation:

שֵׁלֶה into → שֵׁי לוֹ

שֵׁי is a rather obscure word for “gift, present,” attested in Isaiah 18:7 and Psalm 68:30 (v. 29 Eng.). לוֹ, of course, is the separable preposition with a 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix: “*Until a gift (or tribute) comes to him.*” In favor of this rendering is that it's simple. If you have to emend, this is probably one the least objectionable of the proposed emendations.

On the other hand, one should always be very hesitant to emend the Masoretic text. The Masoretes were so vastly superior to any modern scholars in their level of Biblical knowledge and were, needless to say, 1200 years closer than we are to the autographs. Also opposed to this view is the fact that in other places where שֵׁי occurs, the noun יְבֻל, “*tribute,*” generally appears in construct with it. Also, the obedience colon would logically be expected to *precede* such a statement concerning tribute rather than follow it.

**3) “The scepter shall not depart from Judah . . . until he comes to whom it belongs (is due).”**

This rendering is favored by twenty Hebrew manuscripts, the Syriac, several Targums, a manuscript of the Samaritan Pentateuch, LXX/Origen, LXX/Lucien (ὁ ἀποκεῖται), NIV, RSV and the margin of NASB. This assumes the following emendation:

שֵׁלֶה into → אֲשֶׁר לוֹ = שֵׁי לוֹ for שֵׁלֶה

This is a widely-held view, which includes a number of popular English translations. Supporting it is a plethora of reliable textual witnesses, especially the Samaritan Pentateuch, which is ordinarily the strongest possible witness to the integrity of the variant. This emendation may also be supported by another passage,

Ezekiel 21:25–27, an indictment aimed at Judah's last king which contains a very similar construction: *O profane and wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose time of punishment has reached its climax, this is what the Sovereign LORD say: "Take off the turban, remove the crown. It will not be as it was: the lowly will be exalted and the exalted will be brought low. A ruin! A ruin! I will make it a ruin! It will not be restored until he comes to whom it rightfully belongs (עֲרִבָא אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ) to him will I give it"* (NIV, emphasis added). Consider Balge's assessment: "This putative connection between Ezekiel's prophecy and that of Jacob, suggested by Kidner, also offers further biblical support of the messianic interpretation of Genesis 49:10."<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the above emendation has some problems as well. For one thing, it assumes a very early appearance of the prefix  $\text{־שׁ}$  as an abbreviation for the relative pronoun  $\text{אֲשֶׁר}$ . This form is usually found only in later parts of the Old Testament. Also, with such a construction one would expect the personal pronoun  $\text{אֵל}$   $\text{הוּא}$  to follow, which is not the case here. Finally, the historical fulfillment of this purported prophecy doesn't seem to add up. If the "scepter" refers to the possession of political power in Israel, many argue that such power had passed away from the kings of Judah well before Christ arrived on the scene.

**4) "The scepter shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh (the Man of Rest) comes"** This rendering is held by Luther, Keil (though not Delitzsch) and traditional Judaism. It has historically been the received Christian interpretation as well. In favor of this view is, first of all, the fact that no emendation is necessary. This rendering simply assumes that the word is a proper name of a person, namely the Messiah. It could easily derive from a relatively well-attested verb,  $\text{שָׁלַח}$ , which means "to be quiet, to enjoy rest or security." Cf. Jeremiah 12:1, Lamentations 1:5 and Psalm 122:6. As stated above,  $\text{שִׁילֹה}$  is a proper name in every other occurrence in Scripture. Thus it would not be out of place to find a proper name here; only here it is the name of a person, not a place. There is good precedent for a place-name serving also as the name of a person: e.g. Enoch, Shechem. Wonderfully analogous to this formation is the name of "Solomon," formed from the verb  $\text{שָׁלַם}$ , "to be at peace." Shalom . . . Solomon . . . Man of Peace. Shalah . . . Shiloh . . . Man of Rest. Christ's invitation, "*Come unto Me, . . . and I will give you rest,*" springs immediately to mind.

In a *Quartalschrift* essay entitled, "The Law is Not Made for a Righteous Man," August Pieper referred to this passage, assuming as a matter of course that Shiloh was Christ: "We, on the other hand, as those who have reached their majority, are free from them [the strictures of the Law.] But for the great mass of people, for the unbelieving hordes, the covenant was to be an outward arrangement. It is a covenant with a nation in the purely physical sense, with a people that has one outward physical origin, merely held together by blood relationship. This nation is to be preserved until the fullness of time is come. **When Shiloh shall come, the gathering of the people shall be unto Him.** And for this nation as a corporate body the Old Testament covenant, 'the law,' was meant purely as a taskmaster."<sup>4</sup>

Not surprisingly, the higher critical scholars of our age have largely dismissed the Messianic interpretation of this passage. It is interesting to note, however, that many factions of pre-Christian Judaism saw this passage as plainly Messianic. Among these was the sect of the Essenes at Qumran, whose Messianic interpretation of this verse has been amply witnessed in the Dead Sea Scroll materials. Rabbinic commentaries as well were uniform in seeing Shiloh as a designation for the coming Messiah.<sup>5</sup>

There are many other renderings of verse ten, most requiring extensive emendation. Some of them are quite ingenious. As for me, I'm with Luther and the rest of historic Christianity in seeing this verse as a clear prophecy of the Christ coming from the line of Judah. Unto *Him*, and no one else, would the everlasting obedience of the nations be. The presumed root  $\text{יָקַח}$ , "to obey," is found only in nouns and only twice: here and in that rather graphic passage, Proverbs 30:17: *The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.*

In short, verse ten simply *must* be Messianic. If one recalls the other clear prophecies that were given to Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham and to Jacob himself, then the question of which of Jacob's sons would carry the promise must have been foremost on everyone's mind at the time Jacob gave his blessing. They must have been dying to find out! This is a clear answer to that question. Yes, the scepter of political power would in time depart from Judah. But the *spiritual* scepter would remain. The royal line of Judah would maintain its spiritual supremacy until Shiloh, the promised Messiah, would arrive to claim the throne of David and bring salvation to mankind.

## Verses Eleven and Twelve

11 אָסְרִי לַגֶּפֶן עִירָה וְלִשְׂרָקָה בְּנֵי אֶתְנֹו כֶּבֶס בֵּינָן  
 לְבָשׁוּ וּבְרָם-עֲנָבִים סוּתָה:  
 12 חֲכָלִילִי עֵינָיִם מִיָּין וּלְבָן-שָׁנִים מִחֶלֶב:

11. *He tethers his colt to the vine,  
 And the foal of his donkey to the choice vine;  
 He washes his garment in wine,  
 His clothing in the blood of grapes.*  
 12. *His eyes are darker than wine,  
 His teeth whiter than milk.*

Qal part act m s + parag yodh; *bind, tie*

אָסְרִי [אָסַר]

Noun m s + 3 m s suff; *young ass, foal*

עִירָה [עַיָר]

Noun f s + pref waw +pref lamedh; *red vine,  
 choice vine*

וּלִשְׂרָקָה [שְׂרָקָה]

Noun m s + 3 m s suff; *garment, clothing*

לְבָשׁוּ

Noun m pl; *grap*

עֲנָבִים [עַנְבִי]

Noun m s; *garment*

סוּתָה [סוּת]

Noun m pl, as adj; *red, dark*

חֲכָלִילִי

**Notes:** If contained in a purely secular context, these verses could well be taken (as several commentators do) merely as an expression of Judah's coming material wealth and prosperity. Abundance of produce, wine and clothing were considered the standard measure of prosperity and happiness. And yet there are certainly Messianic overtones here as well. The reference to the colt and the foal of a donkey, while not as overt a prophecy of Palm Sunday as Zechariah 9:9, must certainly raise questions as to whether Jacob wasn't being allowed a dim premonition of the Savior's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. As to the second hemistich you may make your own comparison to Isaiah 63:1-3: *Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?—“I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? “I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes.”*

The comparison is inescapable. Indeed, those who miss the abundant Messianic import of this section have succumbed to a classic case of failing to see the forest for the trees. But we will not fail. Let us ever watch for the reappearing of our Shiloh in glory, sober and alert as those who must give an account, yet confident of the promised heavenly rest He is sure to bring. *Even so, come quickly Lord Jesus. Amen.*

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### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> W. Moran, "Genesis 49:10 and Its Use in Ezekiel 21:32" *Biblica*. Vol. 39, 405f.

<sup>2</sup> Balge, Richard. "A Sermon Study: Genesis 49:10" *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. Vol. 78, No. 4 (Oct. 1981) 317.

<sup>3</sup> Balge, 318.

<sup>4</sup> Pieper, August. "The Law is Not Made for a Righteous Man" *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. Trans. K. G. Sievert. Vol. 58, No. 1 (Jan. 1961) 39.

<sup>5</sup> In an unpublished essay Christian scholar Chuck Missler writes: "If you think that this is a Christian contrivance, think again. Here are several ancient rabbinical references that indicate that the rabbis believed that Genesis 49:10 was referring to the Messiah. In the Targum Onkelos it states: "The transmission of domain shall not cease from the house of Judah, nor the scribe from his children's children, forever, until Messiah comes." In the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan it states: "King and rulers shall not cease from the house of Judah . . . until King Messiah comes." The Targum Yerushalmi states: "Kings shall not cease from the house of Judah . . . until the time of the coming of the King Messiah . . . to whom all the dominions of the earth shall become subservient." In the Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 98b, Rabbi Johanan said: "The world was created for the sake of the Messiah, what is this Messiah's name? The school of Rabbi Shila said 'his name is Shiloh, for it is written; until Shiloh come.'" These amazing commentaries should eliminate any doubt that the Jews that lived prior to the Christian era believed that one of the names of the Messiah was Shiloh."

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## **The Son of Man in His Interaction with the Children of Men**

*As human relative interacting with His human relatives*

William Henkel

\* This second installment of Henkel's "Son of Man" series, available to us through the translation efforts of Norman Greve, was originally part of the first article written in German for *Theologische Quartalschrift* many years ago. After a lengthy introduction on the name "Son of Man," its origin and usage and what the name expressed (see previous issue 45:4 of the *Journal of Theology*), the author concluded his initial article with the content of part 1, "The Son of Man as human relative interacting with His human relatives,"<sup>1</sup> contained on pages 12-22 of volume 22, number 1 (Jan. 1925). What is here offered in English, however, has been abridged and thus does not include the excursus material<sup>2</sup> found on pages 19-22.

In the ninth chapter of Romans Paul speaks of the forefathers of his nation and then says, "From whom Christ descended according to the flesh, who is God over all, blessed forever."<sup>3</sup> The Son of God has thus received human flesh, and indeed the flesh of the Jewish people. He has become a descendant of Abraham and a son of David according to the flesh. And just as He has become a person belonging to a definite ethnic group, He has also become the relative, the member of a definite family, and has had close and dear relatives, even as other people do.

The Scriptures speak of His parents (γονεῖς αὐτοῦ), an aunt (ἀδελφή τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ), brothers (ἀδελφοί) and also His sisters (ἀδελφαὶ αὐτοῦ). Whether these last references indicate brothers and sisters (and if so, half-siblings or step-siblings) or male and female cousins is a much-contested question, which does not permit a definitive answer, since the proponents of both views must go beyond the data given by Scripture in bringing their evidence. The matter is insignificant for the certainty of our redemption and for our faith-life<sup>4</sup> and is therefore not worth a great expense of effort and time. We therefore do not enter into it. This is our position on this question: nowhere in the New Testament or in the collected Koine literature, as far as we have been able to

examine it (compare the lexicon of Moulton and Milligan), does ἀδελφός ever mean “cousin” when it is used of relationship. It always means “brother”; thus we accept that Jesus had brothers, but we leave it undecided whether the relationship was a blood or a legal relationship. In the latter case [of legal relationship] one could bring both views of our question into accord with each other and say, “The nearest physical kinsmen of Jesus in the collateral line were his cousins, children of Joseph’s brother Alphaus (Klopas or Kleophas); but since these were adopted by Joseph after his brother’s death, if we dare believe tradition, Jesus’ cousins were simultaneously His brothers.”<sup>5</sup>

With these brothers and sisters, who were probably some of His playmates, Jesus grew up at Nazareth in the home of His parents, where He was cherished and protected with a true parental love. He visited the temple at Passover with Mary and Joseph, probably already now and then as a small boy and then regularly from His twelfth year and beyond. Later on, He also rested many times at the house of His mother and in the circle of His brothers and sisters when He returned, tired and faint, from a tour of preaching. With His relatives He attended family festivities, such as the wedding at Cana. What was His behavior on such occasions? How did He conduct Himself toward His relatives? It is difficult for us to form an image of His interaction with them. We generally allow ourselves to envision Him in His dealings with His relatives as too divine and too little human. A reverent awe on the one hand and a certain dogmatic constraint on the other easily impede us from picturing Him according to the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews: “He has been made like His brothers in all points.”<sup>6</sup> Among the theologians to whom Christ is more than a mere man, few have had the understanding of Luther in thinking of Him as a true and genuine man, as demonstrated in Luther’s remarks (among others) about His childhood obedience to Mary and Joseph and His temptation. The Scriptures tell us only a little about the interaction of Jesus with His relatives, and this scant information is naturally found within a narrowly limited area. The family relationships Jesus held with people were restricted. He was not a husband or a father; only as a son and brother is He portrayed to us.

### **Jesus as son to His mother and step-father**

There is not much that we learn from Scripture about His relationship as a son. Among the few things mentioned is the report concerning His temple visit as a twelve-year-old boy. On that occasion He remained behind in Jerusalem, without His parents noticing. When they miss Him and then find Him after a heart-wrenching search, He is sitting among the teachers of the Jewish people in a hall in the temple complex where, according to tradition, members of the Sanhedrin publicly taught on the Sabbath and on the high festival days. Was one of the teachers to whom He listened and of whom He asked questions the great Hillel or the renowned Shammai? Were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus among those who heard Him and became astonished at His understanding and His answers? Mary and Joseph approach Him and rebuke Him for remaining in Jerusalem. Here for the first time a ray of His divine glory breaks through the humble covering of His flesh when He answers, “Do you not know that I must be ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου? The Authorized Version of the English Bible translates: “Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?” The Greek words [ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου] can bear such a meaning, but that they convey this meaning here is very unlikely. The Child does not want to say to His parents at what activity, but in what place they should have sought Him. He did promote “His Father’s business” also at home in the manner befitting Him as one in servant’s form and as a child. And whoever may suppose that in the temple He occupied Himself in doing His Father’s business by publicly teaching introduces a foreign, disruptive feature into the portrait of the Savior, who according to His human nature in the state of humiliation as a child was not yet an accomplished teacher, but increased in wisdom, stature and grace with God and men.

At the time of Christ ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου, as has been recently established from the Koine literature, meant exactly the same as the English expression “at my father’s.” Understood in this way, the answer of the boy Jesus certainly includes an indication of His divine descent, but nothing unchildlike.<sup>7</sup> He is a real, genuine child—only without sin. He has not sinned against His parents when He stayed in Jerusalem without them; He needed to be in His Father’s house. Moreover, He remained pure and undefiled in His position as son. “He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them.” He kept the fourth commandment in the sense of Luther’s explanation: “But serve and obey them and hold them in love and esteem.”

The fact that the Scriptures tell us nothing further of His childhood surely has this reason: His life was externally indistinguishable from those of other children. An event, however, is reported to us from His adult life, which throws a bright light upon the segment of His life between the just-mentioned temple visit and His

public appearance at the wedding in Cana. Mary asks Him to supply the need of the wedding couple. In spite of the apparent rejection which she experienced, she says to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” These words speak volumes in spite of the brevity and stand in place of a long description of the relationship of Jesus to His mother. She knows from repeated experience that her Son would meet her with no refusal, if it were possible to fulfill her wish. And she is not disappointed in her trust; her request is answered beyond her asking and understanding.

We hear of the mother and her Son for the last time in the final hour of death. The Crucified One sees His mother Mary and His beloved disciple John standing beneath the cross. While He languishes in body and soul, He thinks of her who had given birth to Him in pain, who had diligently cared for Him in the days of His helplessness and had watched over Him with a true mother’s love. Before He departs, He commends her into the true care of the disciple who had stood closest to Him.

However, throughout the dealings which the Son of Man fostered with His mother, there sounds another accent which bothers us, a harsher accent which we do not expect in the Son’s relationship with His mother. Not only at the wedding in Cana, but also at the hour of separation on Golgotha He addresses Mary not with the dear name of “mother,” but with γύναι. Now certainly no contempt lies in this word when used as an address (compare the German use of *Weib*<sup>8</sup>); but the expression does lack the warmth and intimacy which the name “mother” brings out. It sounds as though Jesus does not remind or want it called to mind the relationship that exists between Him and His mother according to the flesh. And what He says to her at the wedding in Cana does not sound loving and close either. He abruptly dismisses her request. The words τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί γύναι sound harsh and hard; this no one can deny. More than that, it raises a certain barrier, it establishes a cleft between Him and her; this too we must concede. And the relationship between Him and her does not change later on. When He delivered a powerful sermon, a woman raised her voice and called out, “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts which you have sucked.” He again diverted the attention away from the relationship according to the flesh between Himself and Mary when He replied, “Yea, blessed are they that hear and keep the Word of God.”

### **Jesus as relative in the family**

The relationship is no different between Him and His brothers (that is, cousins<sup>9</sup>), though this is easier to explain, since they, at least most of the time, stood inwardly apart from Him. John even reports that they did not believe in Him (John 7:5). The relationship between Him and His relatives never appears close to us after His public appearance in Israel. Just after the completion of a series of addresses, when He was made aware that His mother and brothers had come to Him and wished to speak with Him, He stretched out His hands over His disciples and said, “Behold, My mother and My brothers. For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven, He is My brother and sister and mother” (Matt. 12:46-50).

How should we explain this relationship of the Son of Man with His earthly relatives? Does He want us to despise the ties of blood and learn to deprecate family life? Should we consider wife, father, mother, son, daughter, brother and sister as nothing? We dare not interpret the interaction of the Son of Man with His relatives in this way. After all, He did create the family through the institution of marriage. He does want parents to be viewed as His representatives. He has set forth in His Law how family members relate to one another, how they should love and honor each other. He has taken from family life the most glorious images through which He illustrates for us God’s relationship to us and various events in the kingdom of God. And the Scripture in the Psalms indeed praises the blessed state of the God-fearing family. No, it is upon other grounds that Christ does not stress, but rather completely minimizes His own family ties.

He had indeed become a human, just as we are; but He is not earthly, not of this earth. He is down from above. He has not come into the world to put down roots here and to grow together with the world. He has come in order to accomplish a definite mission and then return to heaven. He has come to seek and to save those who are lost, to fashion an eternal redemption through suffering and death. To this end He needed to become a man and to have a mother. But He has not come to be the son of Mary, but the Son of Man, who represents all men, who belongs to the whole of humanity. After He let Himself be baptized by John, after His heavenly Father had certified Him before the entire world as the Anointed One, the Savior of the world, when He said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I have good pleasure”—after these things His time belonged to the One who had sent Him. His given task was too great for Him to devote Himself to it with only part of His strength. Too much was at stake for a woman to dare to speak to Him about it and frustrate His Father’s plans, even if only in one part.

He had no time to bask daily in the love of His earthly mother, or to satisfy Himself with earthly happiness at the table of life. His will must be to do the will of Him who sent Him. To do this will was the one great passion the Son of Man had; it laid claim to His whole time and all the strength of His body and soul. This undertaking scarcely would permit Him time to grant His body the needed rest and food and drink (Mark 3:20-21). He was consumed in the performance of His mission. Every thought, every breath was devoted to it.

He gave Himself entirely to it, until the fountain of His strength was exhausted and His moisture was dried up as in the drought of summer,<sup>10</sup> until He cried out: “It is finished!” Nothing and no one dare hinder Him from fulfilling this given task; even family ties dare not be made weighty when He lives by this calling. For this reason, as often as others lay importance on the filial or fraternal relationship, Jesus does not give this worth, but stresses the importance that those standing closest to Him and of most value to Him are they who do not hinder Him from accomplishing the will of God in them and on their part are prepared in their own sphere to work together in the great work which He has come to fulfill.<sup>11</sup>

The natural man<sup>12</sup> who here reads what the Scripture reports of the Son of Man’s interaction with His relatives is doubtlessly disappointed. Whoever seeks in Jesus only a great master of morality will say, “Should not the great teacher of morals be able to set a better example?” Should he not have been, above all else, more tender, more affectionate, more reverential toward his mother?

We—to whom Christ is the One of whom Moses and all the Prophets have prophesied and apart from whom there is no salvation and no name given wherein we must be saved—we see His interaction with His relatives through different eyes. What the Scripture reports to us about this matter fills us with awe and amazement. Jesus goes forth for us to interact with His relatives in His divine majesty. We know that the love Jesus offers to His mother, His brothers, His sisters is stronger, purer and holier than any otherwise found among the children of men. It does infinitely much more than our love can do. A son has never done for his mother what He has done for Mary. That He does not treat His relatives with a distinction above all others, that their concerns do not stand in the forefront of His interest, that His activity and rule in the kingdom of God and that the exercise of His incomparable calling are in no way influenced by consideration for the earthly lot of His mother, His brothers and His sisters—indeed, that He offers to other people no less love than to His family members—this is a proof to us of His divine greatness.

It is in consideration of human limitations that our love is specified to narrower or wider boundaries and the Scriptures call out to us: “Whoever does not care for the members of His own household, he is worse than a heathen” and also “Let us do good to everyone, but especially to our companions in the faith.” Our love is not hot enough to warm up the whole world; it is too confined in its means to be able to bless everyone. If our love is to accomplish anything, we must be confined to a small circle of fellow men to whom it is our particular assignment to show love and do good. How highly exalted over us is the Son of Man! He has love enough for everyone. His love is great enough to embrace everyone with ardent passion. It is strong enough to suffer for all, to bleed and die for all, to be made a curse for all. What significance does earthly love for family have with this love? The reports to us concerning the Son of Man’s interaction with His relatives are therefore completely comforting and faith-strengthening. They are one of the most immediate and convincing proofs of His divine Sonship<sup>13</sup> and of His saving mission. It serves equally well as proof of the fact that the Gospels are not biased literature or propaganda writings, but rather portray the life of the Son of Man in the flesh without human reflection or mental reservation and with historical objectivity and faithfulness.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> The original wording of the title of part 1 is “*Der Menschensohn als leiblicher Verwandter im Umgang mit seinen Verwandten nach dem Fleisch*” (p. 12).

<sup>2</sup> Henkel ended his initial article with a discussion of the blessedness of pastors being married and the necessity of the pastor’s household serving as a good example of the Christian family and home.

<sup>3</sup> Unless noted otherwise, Scripture quotations in this article are the translation of the German quotation employed by Henkel.

<sup>4</sup> Lit. *Glaubensleben*

<sup>5</sup> In parentheses at the end of the quotation Henkel cites the source as “vergleiche F. Pieper, *Christl. Dogmatik*, II, 368f.”

<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 2:17 NKJ: Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

<sup>7</sup> The German word here is *unkindlich*, rendered by Cassell's New German Dictionary as "unchildlike, precocious; forward; unfilial, undutiful." The rendering "unfilial" would convey the idea "unbecoming from a child to a parent, not observing the obligations of a child to a parent," according to *The American College Dictionary*. However, the context seems to suggest that this is not yet the sense intended in Henkel's usage at this point.

<sup>8</sup> *Weib* means "woman" or "wife" and is used by Luther to translate *gu,nai* in John 2:4 (Luther Bibel 1912).

<sup>9</sup> This parenthetical remark is the translation of *resp. Vettern*. Henkel appears to support the claim that Jesus did not have half-brothers who were directly descended from Mary and Joseph.

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 32:4 NKJ: For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Matthew 12:48-50 previously cited and also Matthew 10:37: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (NKJ).

<sup>12</sup> *Der natürliche Mensch*, apparently said in reference to Paul's description of the unbeliever in 1 Corinthians 2:14; cf. Luther's translation of this passage: *Der natürliche Mensch aber vernimmt nichts vom Geist Gottes*.

<sup>13</sup> "His divine Sonship" is the translation of *seine Gottessohnschaft*.

(To be continued)

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## **Books and Reviews**

### **Brief observations and information regarding recent books from Northwestern Publishing House and Concordia Publishing House:**

Departing somewhat from our usual practice of reviewing individual books, in this space we want to call attention to certain books made available in recent years by the publishing houses of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS). We have not been able to read these books in full, nor in some cases even to see a copy. But we think our readers ought to be aware of their existence.

Concordia Publishing House (CPH) has regularly been putting out new volumes in the *Concordia Commentary* series. Each one of these volumes is priced at \$42.99, even though they are not at all uniform in size. For example, *Song of Songs* by Christopher Mitchell is listed as having 1344 pages, whereas *Colossians* by Paul Deterding is listed as having only 200 pages. Most of the books seem to have between 600 and 700 pages. So far, we have heard favorable comments from users with respect to two of the volumes: *Revelation* by Louis Brighton and *First Corinthians* by Gregory Lockwood. The others listed on the Concordia website include *Ezekiel 1-20* by Horace Hummel, *Joshua* by Adolph Harstad, *Leviticus* by John Kleinig, *Philemon* by John Nordling, *Proverbs* by Andrew Steinmann, and two volumes on Luke, *Luke 1:1-9:50* and *Luke 9:51-24:53*, by Arthur Just, Jr. Although these are relatively more expensive volumes, it is good to have available some full-length exegetical commentaries written by Lutheran theologians. For many books of the Bible detailed grammatical commentaries in recent years have come mainly from Calvinistic, Arminian and Pentecostal scholars, and we need to be on guard. Of course, we need to be on guard against false teaching within Lutheran commentaries too, especially since the authors seem to be comfortable as members of Lutheran synods which are no longer orthodox.

Two recent volumes published by Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) are translations of works by two well-known Synodical Conference theologians from an earlier time, Adolf Hoenecke and Carl Manthey Zorn. Hoenecke, considered as one of the finest dogmatists of the Wisconsin Synod, authored four volumes of systematic theology, originally written in German with many Latin quotations. Volumes 3 and 4 are now available in English. The *Journal of Theology* printed an extended review in Volume 40, #3 (Sept. 2000, pp. 49-54) of Hoenecke's Volume 4, which was published in 1999. Volume 3, published in 2003, includes discussions of predestination, Christology and the order of salvation, in addition to sections on conversion, justification and

sanctification.

Zorn, the author of the devotional book *Manna*, also wrote a devotional commentary on Psalms. This was translated by John F. Sullivan (father of Professor Paul Sullivan) after his retirement in 1984. The English translation is titled *Psalms - A Devotional Commentary*. The foreword by the editor, Robert Koester, outlines the very interesting biography of Zorn, who was openly hostile to Christianity in his youth in Germany, but after his conversion became a missionary in India and a long-time pastor of an LC-MS congregation in Cleveland, Ohio.

John Brug, author of the two volumes on Psalms in the paperback *People's Bible* series, has now converted his exegetical studies on the Psalms into two hard-cover full-length commentaries published by NPH. These are *A Commentary on Psalms 1-72*, 671 pages, and *A Commentary on Psalms 73-150*, 520 pages. If both books are purchased, the listed price is \$65.59. They contain the Hebrew text, a translation and a commentary. There are 111 pages of introductory material in the first volume, including discussions of authorship, dating, arrangement and types of psalms, the poetry of the psalms and how historical criticism has handled the psalms. The second volume contains an index of word studies to be found in both volumes.

Having studied Genesis in seminary under Professor Carl Lawrenz, I am eager to get my hands on *A Commentary on Genesis 1-11* by Carl Lawrenz and John Jeske, both teachers at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for many years. No doubt, the lectures of Lawrenz, on which I took extensive notes at the time, were the beginning of this commentary, and if so, I am quite confident that this book of 340 pages will be worth its listed price of \$32.99.

Another book by John Jeske is *Connecting Sinai to Calvary - A Guide to the Old Testament*, 208 pages for \$19.99. The purpose of this book is to help ordinary Christians learn to understand and appreciate the Old Testament. The author says in the foreword: "First-time readers of the Old Testament have found themselves bogged down in details of ancient history and of faraway places with strange-sounding names. College and seminary students have confessed to this writer that on many pages of the Old Testament, they find it difficult to understand what they're reading" (p. iv). "This handbook has been written with *young* Bible readers in mind – specifically young men and women of junior high and high school ages" (p. v).

Of late NPH has begun publishing series of booklets rather than books, no doubt in the hope that ordinary readers will be more inclined to purchase a booklet for \$5.00-\$7.00 than a full-length book for \$25.00 or more. There are six pamphlets in the Precious Passages series, each listed at \$4.99, including "John 11 - Death Is But a Sleep" by Mark Lenz and "Psalm 51 - God's Repair Manual" by Eric Hartzell. The entire set of six is available for \$23.95. Another series of ten booklets on Bible characters has been published, including "David" by John Ibisch and "Esther" by James Aderman. Each one of these booklets is about 40 pages long and probably could be read in one sitting. The unit price in the Bible characters series is listed at \$6.99, which seems expensive for such small booklets.

Mark Paustian has written a set of two books entitled *Prepared to Answer*, which is intended to help Christians answer questions put to them by their friends and neighbors. The price for the two-volume set is \$29.98. Glen Thompson's translation of *The Unaltered Augsburg Confession* is available for \$6.00. Armin Schuetze, author of many useful volumes, has written *Martin Luther - Reformer*, 152 pages for \$12.99. Last of all, we mention *Feminism* by Nathan Pope, a 306-page book listed at \$15.99.

I wish there could be some way that Lutheran publishing houses could put out full-length books as inexpensively as Inter-Varsity Press. For example, the IVP series entitled *The Bible Speaks Today* offers two full-length paperback books every few months or so at a total price of \$22.97 for both volumes. This includes postage and handling. The books in this series are also commentaries of entire Bible books, including a 400-page commentary on *Romans* by John Stott as well as shorter commentaries on shorter books. Yet even the shortest of these books is close to 200 pages. Perhaps Lutherans don't buy as many books by Lutheran scholars as they would like to, simply because they can't afford them. I know we don't buy as many books from Lutheran publishers for our Seminary library as we would like for the very same reason.

**Erich Beyreuther: *Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg – A Biography of the First Protestant Missionary in India 1682-1719*, translated from the German by S. G. Lang and H. W. Gensichen, The Christian Literature Society, Chennai, India, 1955, 1998, paperback, 92 pages.**

No doubt, many of us have learned to recognize certain years in history as pivotal: 325 A.D. for the Council of Nicea, 1492 for the discovery of America, 1517 for Luther's 95 Theses, 1530 for the Augsburg Confession, 1607 for the first permanent settlement of English-speaking pioneers in America, 1776 for the

Declaration of Independence by the American colonies. We should really add one more date and year to this list: July 9, 1706, when two Lutheran missionaries arrived in India to establish the first Protestant mission in that country. These two men were Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Pluetschau, and of these two Ziegenbalg was the recognized leader. These men were truly pioneers, attempting to do things that had never been done before.

Ziegenbalg was born in a small farming town in Germany. He was rather sickly as a child and lost both of his parents while he was still very young. The headmaster at his school recorded that he was a weak person in body and soul. His biographer says of his high school days: "Perhaps Bartholomaeus would have gone astray in the maze of mysticism had it not been for one thing; his constant study of the Bible" (p. 5). Through his study of the Bible he came under the influence of the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. "An eternal hand . . . permitted him, after anxious months, to see the comforting light of the Gospel. He was able to experience the heart established, not through self-effort and striving, but through God's mercy" (p. 6).

Ziegenbalg's desire for higher education was obstructed by the onslaught of a "nervous stomach disorder" that stayed with him his whole life and a "physical breakdown" that brought his education to a halt for a time. But eventually, he made his way to the University of Halle, where one of his teachers was the famous pietist August Francke. There "he became convinced of the penetrating power of the simple Gospel grace which is able to free men from all sin and indifference and give them a spirit of joyous confession and of self-sacrifice" (p. 14).

About this same time King Frederick IV of Denmark, head of the Lutheran Church of Denmark and Norway, became concerned that not one of the Danish clergymen serving Danish colonies in foreign lands had ever endeavored to bring the Christian Gospel to the non-Christians living in those lands. The idea of sending Christian missionaries to foreign lands in order to bring the Gospel to non-Christians was apparently something new and almost unheard of at the time. When King Frederick began to look for young men to serve as such missionaries, the names of Ziegenbalg and Pluetschau were provided to him. At the age of 24 Ziegenbalg preached a mission sermon on Acts 26:17-18 to the king and his court, and "from that time forward the whole royal family was friendly to this young pastor and missionary, and showed him personal goodwill in many ways until his death" (p. 19).

The king's first choice was the West Indies, and his second choice was Guinea on the African coast. For some reason these choices were rejected, and the king sent Ziegenbalg and Pluetschau to the Danish colony in India known as Tranquebar. The two missionaries boarded a ship on November 29, 1705 and were on the sea for seven months; it was a journey Ziegenbalg called "an academy of death" because of the storms, sickness and other dangers.

They reached their destination on July 9, 1706, but nothing went well at first. Neither the ship's captain, nor the governor of the colony, nor the Danish pastors serving the colony cooperated with them, but rather opposed and hindered their cause. Almost at once the missionaries began to learn the Portuguese language spoken by slaves in that region. The first converts were, in fact, Portuguese-speaking slaves.

Of course, their real aim was to bring the Gospel to the native residents of India. Both missionaries devoted themselves to learning the Tamil language. "In less than a year Ziegenbalg spoke Tamil so masterfully that the Indians listened to him breathlessly. He only needed to appear in the street or in a field, when at once hundreds of Tamilians gathered around him and impulsively showed him their respect and love because he spoke their language" (p. 30). He also tried to become acquainted with Indian literature, Hindu philosophy and native thought processes, so that he could better communicate the Gospel to them in a way they could understand it. Very soon he had translated Luther's catechism and the entire New Testament into the Tamil language.

From the very beginning the governor of the colony stood in Ziegenbalg's way. At one point the governor succeeded in having Ziegenbalg imprisoned for four months, from November 1708 to March 1709. His biographer says: "Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg became a different person after his imprisonment, for the trouble which he suffered in those months had left upon him the imprint of an inner dignity and authority which exerted its influence everywhere without words" (p. 48).

Heinrich Pluetschau left India in 1711, but he was replaced by other missionaries who proved faithful, especially Master Gruendler, who continued the work in Ziegenbalg's spirit after Ziegenbalg died.

The remainder of the book details the pioneer work done by the missionaries as well as the obstacles that hindered them. One of their most successful projects was their printing press, with which they published Christian materials, such as the New Testament and a hymnal in the Tamil language. The Lord also blessed the

reports they sent back to Europe, with the result that many Christians became interested in bringing the Gospel to others and formed mission societies to accomplish that goal. Ziegenbalg himself also returned to Europe, where he had the opportunity of presenting his case with great fervor. On this visit he met the fifteen-year-old Count Zinzendorf, who was later instrumental in planting Christian missions all over the world.

On this same trip Ziegenbalg met Maria Dorothea Salzmann, who became his wife and moved to India with him in 1716. While they were still in Europe, “a severe attack of illness laid Ziegenbalg low. With God’s help Maria Dorothea nursed him back to health with tender, loving care day and night” (p. 77).

In the last years of his service Ziegenbalg was involved in erecting a church building. “The new House of God, which was built solidly to last for centuries and today still serves a Tamil Lutheran congregation, was given the name ‘New Jerusalem’” (p. 81). He enjoyed some happy days with his converts, his associates, his wife and his children.

Nevertheless, Ziegenbalg’s last days were troubled by a disagreement with the Danish mission board and its secretary, who believed that “the missionaries like the apostles of old should wander about and preach from place to place without any money in their purse. . . . The fact that the missionaries had married and were living in Tranquebar in established homes was an abomination to the unmarried secretary” (pp. 85-86). Worse yet, “he withheld sums of money sanctioned by the King for the mission in Tranquebar as well as other gifts for the mission and used them for the distribution of Danish Bibles at home” (p. 87).

These difficulties hastened Ziegenbalg’s early death, which is described in vivid detail in this biography. As a summary of Ziegenbalg’s accomplishments under God’s blessing it is stated: “Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg opened wide gates for the mission work of Evangelical Christendom. That this work had to be carried on against so much disagreeable opposition in the churches and that a person had to wear himself out prematurely over it is one of the saddest chapters of church history. And yet through those dark days God’s great faithfulness shone forth. . . . Against bitter opposition and stupidity, Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg paved the way for foreign mission. He gave his life for the work. It is one of God’s mysteries that He performed His great deeds through suffering witnesses” (p. 92).

*David Lau*