

FEBRUARY 15

Today is a milestone for you. You will be finishing Exodus, the second book in the Bible and the Old Testament, and you'll begin Mark, the second gospel and the second book in the New Testament. Time to treat yourself to something at Starbucks© or some Chinese take-out!

Exodus 39-40

Exodus 39

Vs. 1-7 Now we learn that God is into fashion. "He" is referring to Bezalel, ben Uri, ben Hur of the tribe of Judah. He was the chief craftsman.

V. 6 The thing that stands out to me regarding the ephod, or bib apron that Aaron wore, is that on the shoulder pieces there were two stones, one on each shoulder. These stones had the names of the tribes of Israel on them. It signified the responsibility the priest bore before the Lord, representing the people of the promise. He bore this on his shoulders.

Vs. 8-21 Notice how much space is given to the breastpiece or pouch that hung from the shoulders or the ephod. Notice too that the breastpiece had the rows of stones, each of them bearing a name of a tribe of Israel. These were to be on Aaron's heart, as he came before the Lord. He bore their names as he served them as a responsibility and as a passion before God.

Not mentioned here is that the ephod and its breastpiece held two dice-like thingies in it, the Urim and the Thummim. These were used for determining God's will or judgment. When Aaron or any priest wore these clothes, he was serving the people to help them stand before God and seek His will.

When Gideon later makes his own ephod, it was probably in rebellion to using the corrupt priests and Levitical system. His bad. With his own ephod, Gideon could seek God's will without consulting a priest or going to the tabernacle. In sin Gideon rebelled against God's order. Gideon should have worked to reform the system God had appointed which would have brought health to Israel, as Gideon led them to submit to Him and His way. Instead, Gideon made an ephod for himself, and, thereby, led the nation into idolatry as they came to worship at his ephod.

Years later, when David is on the run, a priest, Abiathar the son of Ahimelech, fled to David in Keilah. He came down with an ephod in his hand. The importance of the ephod was what was in it, the Urim and Thummim. David made use of these on several occasions to find God's will and it saved him more than once.

What made David a real model, for us as disciples, was that during his younger years, he constantly sought the Lord. The priest was to constantly seek the Lord on behalf of the people. He was not to do what he thought, but was to follow what the Lord said and so lead the people before God. He was to bear responsibility for them with their names on his shoulders and on his heart. And the breastpiece held these two stones for helping the people know the will of God.

For us as disciples, our prayer life and our reading, our life closely following our Savior in the harvest, is the true measure of our ability to lead others into deeper discipleship. We pursue God because of our love for Him, but also to lead others accurately and truly, making disciples, who make disciples.

Vs. 22-26 This robe went on top of the ephod. Significant here are the bells and the pomegranates. They made a tinkling sound when the priest was in the Holy Place tending to the lampstand and incense and replacing the bread. It reminded him that God was on the other side of the veil in the Most Holy Place listening to him. Also, the people who stood outside of the courtyard would be able to hear the priest serving them before the Lord.

Vs. 27-29 The other priests wore fine clothing, but only the high priest wore the clothes described above. They all wore the boxers described here.

Vs. 30-31 On the turban the high priest wore the crown that said, *Holy to the Lord*. This was a visual image for the priest to remember to keep his life holy before the Lord, so that he could serve the people. Ironically, we have been seeing in the NT that the high priest who commanded Jesus' death was not holy. He was an evil man.

Vs. 32-43 This is when they brought everything completed to Moses. Everything is ready for assembly. Notice the repetition in vs. 42-43. They had obeyed the Lord, and Moses blessed them.

Exodus 40

Vs. 1-8 Here is God's command to Moses, when and how to construct the tabernacle and the court. Notice the time notation in v. 1. It gives you an idea of how long this took. It was definitely a major community project. The people left Egypt a year earlier in the first month. Roughly speaking it took them three months to get to Mt. Sinai, then Moses was on the mountain 40 days and then another 40 days renewing the covenant. That would have left them about 6.5 months for all of the work.

Vs. 9-15 These are the orders for consecrating everything by anointing them. This included Aaron and his sons.

Vs. 16-33 Moses had charge of building the tabernacle and initiating the worship. In that sense it appears that Moses was actually the first priest of Israel until Aaron took over.

V. 32 It looks like Aaron and his sons were to wash before they went into the Holy Place and when they returned and went toward the altar.

V. 33 The final thing that was put up was the doorway screen, the entrance or gate to the court of the tabernacle. From this point on, the tabernacle and its court would be called the *tent of meeting* and it would be where Moses would meet with the Lord. Instead of it being outside the camp of Israel, the tabernacle will be in the exact center of the camp.

Vs. 34-38 This is God Himself consecrating the courtyard and the tabernacle. The cloud stood over the courtyard, and His glory filled the tabernacle.

Notice in vs. 36-38 that the cloud and the fire were present day and night to assure them of God's presence with them. Interestingly, Israel took this presence for granted.

As disciples following Jesus in the harvest, His presence in us is His Spirit, night and day, leading us in His Word, speaking to us and directing us as we walk each day. This is also very easy to take for granted. Just think though, the Holy Spirit of God is within us to lead us and help us. That should never be a commonplace thought, acknowledged and ignored.

Mark 1:1-28

This gospel is unique for a couple of reasons. Mark was the caffeine king of disciples. His short, quick account of the Gospel of Christ was the first Gospel, written to get the believers in Rome up to speed with some accurate information.

The second thing I love is that this Gospel depicts Jesus as the "Suffering Servant," written by John Mark, the failed servant. What a discipleship lesson in itself. Mark, the well-to-do, true-blue-Jew, city boy went with Uncle Barnabas and Paul on the first missionary journey and washed out in the first month. Defeated and broken, Barnabas nurtured Mark back into service, but Paul wouldn't have it. Therefore, Barnabas and Paul split. This "failed servant" became our first Gospel writer, and, when Paul was about to die, Paul tells Timothy to bring Mark into this very dangerous spot to help him.

So, notice how selective Mark is. Mark hits all the big events.

Vs. 1-8 This is John the Baptist fulfilling the OT promise that God would send His messenger, to prepare the way for the Messiah.

Vs. 9-13 This is the baptism of Jesus where He is anointed or commissioned as the Messiah, the coming King who will rule forever. Then Jesus is driven by the Spirit to confront the devil.

Vs. 14-20 Jesus began His ministry and called His disciples. Knowing the other Gospels, Jesus has been followed by the disciples for several months. This is their formal calling to follow Him. Jesus is shown to have the authority as the Son of Man to call these men.

Vs. 21-28 Jesus is shown to be superior to the scribes in His teaching, and He is shown to have authority over the unclean spirits. Now His fame begins to skyrocket...and all of this in 28 verses.

Psalm 35:1-16

Repeatedly, as David ran from King Saul, hiding in the mountains, living in caves with a small community that may have numbered more than 1200, he resisted fighting for himself against Saul. David was obeying God, yet he was still pursued, so the Spirit nudges David to cry out to God for help and for God to fight for him.

Before we judge David for the words here, remember that the Lord inspired these words. Also, it is hard for us to understand completely what was happening in this situation. God knew and motivated David to cry out like this.

Vs. 1-3 This is David's cry for God to fly into action. David knew his cause was just and that God had anointed him to be king. The injustice of what was happening, the lying and the constant danger of being pursued by Saul, must have created real problems for David.

Vs. 4-8 Notice the repetition of *let*. Tomorrow in the second half of this psalm there will be more.

Vs. 9-10 David understood that the only vindication that would set his heart to rest would have to come from the Lord.

Vs. 11-16 This lament reminds me of Job. When Job was down, those whom he had helped scorned him. Sometimes it takes the opposition of men and of friends to push us to the place of understanding that only the Lord can truly help us and lift us up.

This psalm concludes tomorrow.

Proverbs 9:11-12

V. 11 is easy to understand. I think the first part of 12 means that if you are wise, it brings benefit to your own life; but if you are a scoffer, it will be something that you add to your life that weighs you down.