

Exodus

Opening Hymn: #32—“The Prospect”

The Hebrew title for the second book of the Bible is “Shemoth,” meaning “Names.” It comes from the opening words of the book. But the Septuagint title more closely conveys what happens in the book: “Exodos” [ending with -os] is a Greek word meaning “The Way Out.” Strong says it means “exit.” (In English we change the spelling to -us.)

Why does “The Way Out” sound appropriate to us? Because we see the Israelites in slavery to a powerful Pharaoh for hundreds of years. God provides a way out of that condition into a new life which far exceeds their expectations. All that is required is that they exercise faith in Him. It was more than they could do:

Heb. 3:17,19 But with whom was he grieved 40 years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

The Greek word “exodos” appears eight chapters later in Hebrews:

Heb. 11:22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing [exodos] of the children of Israel and gave commandment concerning his bones.

There are only two other places in the N.T. where this Greek word appears. Neither instance has anything to do with the Israelites. This lovely Greek word expressing the way out of one condition into another was used by one of the gospel writers to describe how Jesus viewed his death and subsequent resurrection into glory.

The Sufferings of This Life

In the middle of chapter 16 of Matthew, Jesus has a serious talk with his disciples. He asks them who others think he is. He gets a variety of responses. Some think he’s Elijah. The people knew about the “sending of Elijah” spoken by Malachi. Some thought he was one of the prophets. That was understandable since he lived such a simple life. But when Jesus asked them who they thought he was, it was Peter who in a flash of insight gave the right answer:

Matt. 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Now if you were a part of that little band of disciples, and if you really believed that Jesus was the Son of God, what would you expect him to do? You’d probably expect him to take the steps to throw off the Roman yoke of bondage. That would require raising an army or acquiring political power. But Jesus wasn’t doing either of those things. Wouldn’t you begin to have doubts about whether he really was the Son of God? It appears John the Baptist had such doubts. His expectations didn’t agree with what Jesus was doing.

What the disciples did not know was that Jesus was going to suffer and die. He began to explain this for the first time:

Matt. 16:21,22 From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be

killed and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

Peter's expectations about what Jesus should really be doing with his life are so strong he dares to argue with the Lord. But it is Peter who needs to gain a clearer perspective about what's supposed to be happening in **this** life. Let's pick up this experience in Luke:

Luke 9:23-27 And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross **daily** and follow me. For whomsoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world and lose himself or be cast away? [vs. 27] But I tell you of a truth there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God.

This seeing was necessary so they would appreciate that suffering in this life was not all there was to it. The glory to follow would far exceed their expectations.

This prophecy about some seeing the kingdom of God was fulfilled eight days later according to Luke. (Matthew and Mark say six days, but they exclude the day Jesus said it and the day the fulfillment occurred.) Whatever happened to them in that time was not considered important compared to what they had been told and what was to happen to three of them.

The Transfiguration

Luke 9:28-36 And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered and his raiment was white and glistening. And behold there talked with him two men which were Moses and Elias [Elijah], who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here. And let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: [not knowing what he said]. While he thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

Here was the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy that some would "see" the kingdom of God. This is clearly an important event for it is recorded by three of the Gospel writers. Matthew and Mark both say that Jesus was "transfigured" before them. That's why we call this the "transfiguration scene." Luke doesn't use that word. Let's think back on this reading and try to summarize exactly what happened:

1. Peter/James/John witnessed a spectacular vision [to use the word found in Matthew's account]. They would later remember this for these three were with him when once again he prayed in Gethsemane just before he was taken by force and crucified.
2. This vision was Jesus in glory. Matt. 17:2 says, "And [Jesus] was transfigured before them and his face did shine as the sun and his raiment was white as the light."

3. They saw Moses and Elijah. How did they know? It was all part of this miracle. They were sure who these two people were.
4. They overheard the conversation. And what did these three talk about? Exodos! They talked about the coming death and resurrection, The Way Out. This is one of only three occurrences of this Greek word in the N.T.
5. Peter impulsively suggests they stay right there. In the Mark account, we read that Peter didn't know what to say because they were afraid. Under such circumstances you would have thought Peter would have remained silent. But he didn't.
6. Finally the cloud covered them and the voice of approval has heard by all.

The Vision in Detail

Both Matthew and Mark say the earlier discussion with the disciples about his coming suffering took place near Caesarea Philippi. 14 miles from that place is Mt. Hermon. It's 9,100-foot high. The word "Hermon" means "a consecrated place." This is probably where the vision occurred.

It was a vision and NOT a dream. They were sleepy, of course. They had walked up this mountain and it was night. But all three would hardly dream the same dream. The vision was similar to what John the Revelator experienced on the isle of Patmos. And in many respects, it was similar to the vision Paul received on the road to Damascus.

In this general context, we read about how his **enemies** wanted a supernatural sign:

Mark 8:11 And the Pharisees came forth and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

He gave them no sign. But his closest disciples, who thought they needed no special sign, received this very special "sign from heaven."

Moses and Elijah: Of course neither of these two were really there. It was a vision. Why these instead of Noah, Daniel, and Job, say? These two were special people in Israel's history, and both were mentioned in the final verses of the old testament:

Mal. 4:4,5 Remember ye the law of **Moses** my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you **Elijah** the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

We note that these two individuals had several experiences in common with Jesus. Both had the experience of fasting for 40 days in a wilderness situation. Both had a very special relationship with God. Both had peculiar deaths. God took Moses after allowing him to see the promised land from the top of Pisgah's mountain. Elijah was caught up in a whirlwind and was seen no more.

The selection of Moses was also related to something Moses said:

Deut. 18:15 The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall harken.

There's no question Peter was familiar with these words. He quoted them in Acts 3:22 when he preached to the people of Jerusalem and applied the words to Jesus. The experience of the transfiguration vision, seeing Jesus and Moses together, may have given him this insight.

I think we can see more in the selection of these two, however. This was a vision of the kingdom in its glory. With the glorified Jesus we have two people who represent the two phases of the kingdom. Moses: represents the earthly phase, the one who was a faithful servant. Elijah: represents the heavenly phase, those who are "caught up into heaven" if faithful.

Exodus: The use of this Greek word is even a "Moses" subject since it would usually be associated with the exit from Egypt. Note that the subject is specifically the one Peter rebuked the Lord about. "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." Peter needed a special rebuke and this was it. He needed to understand that it wasn't suffering which led to death for all time. But suffering to learn appropriate lessons, which led to death, then exaltation and glory. It was an "exodos," an exit from one condition into another. Peter never forgot this lesson, as we'll soon see.

Peter's words: Peter speaks for the three. He realizes the importance of what has happened and wants to stay there. Some have suggested that it was near the time of the festival of booths [tabernacles] and that he's suggesting that they celebrate it there. But his viewpoint was wrong. We read about the correct viewpoint in...

Heb. 13:13,14 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

The cloud: This was a symbol of God's presence to the Israelites of old. It was mentioned in the account of Moses receiving God's commandments:

Ex. 24:15,16 And Moses went up into the mount and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. [34:29] And it came to pass when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone...

So the cloud was appropriate. And the voice approving everything had been heard before:

Mark 1:11 [after coming up from the water] And there came a voice from heaven saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

This was appropriate reassurance. No matter how unexpected Jesus' behavior might be to the disciples, he was doing his heavenly father's will. He was the son of God and he was still pleasing Him. Note also the word of command: "Hear him." Peter wanted to argue with him. In its own way, this was another rebuke. He got the point, for he emphasized it in his first epistle:

1 Peter 1:3-11 [Diaglott] Obtaining the issue of the faith, even your salvation. Concerning which salvation those prophets, who prophesied concerning the favor towards you, sought out and investigated, examining closely to what things, or what kind of season, the spirit which was in them was pointing out, when it previously testified the sufferings for Christ, and after these the glories.

When this mountain-top experience was over, they descended back down into the valley. Once again they were face-to-face with the world/flesh/devil. Their own sufferings were not over. But they **knew** this was God's will for his son and for them. They had received a glimpse of the coming kingdom's glory. If we had any doubt about this, we need merely turn to Peter's second epistle and read what he thought about it.

Peter Remembers

Peter never forgot this experience. It was indelibly engraved upon his mind, for some 35 years later, when writing his second epistle, he says he saw that glory:

2 Peter 1:16-18 [Diaglott] For we have not been following cunningly devised tales in making known to you the power and appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were beholders of that greatness. For having received from God the Father honor and glory, a voice of this kind was brought to him by the magnificent glory—"This is my son, the beloved, in whom I delight." And this voice which was brought from heaven we heard, being with him on the holy mountain.

All of the things Peter was talking about had been prophesied beforehand. But it was the expectations that were different. The prophecies were not wrong. And this experience of Peter's put God's stamp of approval on the life and ministry of Jesus.

vs. 19 [Weymouth] So we have the word of prophecy confirmed; to which you do well to pay attention—as to a lamp shining in a dark place—until day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

All these things were important to Peter. He knows what he's talking about because of his first-hand experience. And he wants his readers to keep their faith strong. He knows that if they are faithful, death will lead to glorification. It's a "way out," an "exodos." In fact, in the only other place where this word is used, Peter uses it to describe his own death:

2 Peter 1:15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease [Greek: exodos] to have these things always in remembrance.

Peter could have used a perfectly good Greek word for death. But instead he chooses this exceedingly rare word, one which Luke used to describe the conversation between Jesus and the two who were with him in vision. Death was the "way out" from a condition of sin and death—of suffering—into the glories which shall follow. It was very real to Peter and he wanted it to be very real to all the footstep followers of Christ.

Transfiguration

We noted that both Matthew and Mark say that Jesus was "transfigured." That's how we come to call this the transfiguration scene. This Greek word is also interesting because it is used by Paul to describe what's supposed to happen to us:

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed** into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

We get the English word “metamorphosis” from this Greek word. Strong says it means “transform.” It was translated “transfigured” in Matthew and Mark, and “changed” in this text.

This text is not very easy to understand. Clearly Paul is thinking about the face of Moses when he came down from the mount. He mentions that in earlier verses. The phrase “open face” should really be “unveiled face,” the kind of face Moses had when he talked with God. Moses “mirrored” the glory of God in his face and the people could not look upon him. As we commune with the Lord, the glory we behold should have a transforming influence upon us as we become a copy of that glory. And that is the way the Jerusalem Bible translates the Greek:

2 Cor. 3:18 [Jerusalem Bible] And we, with our unveiled face reflecting like mirrors the brightness of the Lord, all grow brighter and brighter as we are turned into the image that we reflect; this is the work of the Lord who is Spirit.

The transformation of our characters is part of our consecrated walk. The best known consecration scripture is Romans 12:1. The very next verse tells us what we’re supposed to do after we present our bodies a living sacrifice:

Rom. 12:2 And be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...

“Transformed” is the same Greek word we’ve been considering. We are changed from the fashion of this world into the fashion of our Lord Jesus Christ. If this transformation does not occur in us, we will not be a part of the body of Christ for we will not be acceptable to God.

Our mountain-top experiences are given to us to increase our faith so that when we come down from the mountain we may be able to continue walking in a narrow way of adversity with full assurance of faith.

[Read “Common Days” if time permits.]

2 Peter 1:10,11 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Closing Hymn: #29 “Dawning Day”

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Common Days

One of the chief dangers of life is trusting occasions. We think that conspicuous events, striking experiences, exalted moments have most to do with our character and capacity. We are wrong. Common days, monotonous hours, wearisome paths, plain old tools, and everyday clothes tell the real story. Good habits are not made on birthdays, nor Christian character at the new year. The vision may dawn, the dream may waken, the heart may leap with a new inspiration on some mountaintop, but the test, the triumph, is at the foot of the mountain, on the level plain.

The workshop of character is everyday life. The uneventful and commonplace hour is where the battle is won or lost. Thank God for a new truth, a beautiful idea, a glowing experience; but remember that unless we bring it down to the ground and teach it to walk with feet, work with hands, and stand the strain of daily life, we have worse than lost it, we have been hurt by it. A new light in our heart makes an occasion; but an occasion is an opportunity, not for building a tabernacle and feeling thankful and looking back to a blessed memory, but for shedding the new light on the old path, and doing old duties with new inspiration. The uncommon life is the child of the common day, lived in an uncommon way.

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