

SERMON: IT TOOK SOME BLOOD

Exodus 4: 24-26

(24) And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him. (25) Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. (26) So He let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.

Introduction

Everyone that hears or reads this sermon is now an academic theologian. You are a theologian because you will wrestle with a very difficult text. Some say, including Walter Brueggemann, one of the greatest Old Testament scholars of our generation, that this text is the most difficult text, in all of the Bible, to exegete correctly and completely.

A text is difficult when portions of it seem to contradict the preponderance of the rest of the Bible. A text is difficult when an obscure word is used only one time in the Holy Scripture. A text is difficult when it seems to contradict a coeval text – a text that covers the same subject or time period. A text is difficult when it raises more questions than it answers.

The narrative is simple, yet baffling. In the original context, it is puzzling. It is more puzzling today and irritates our post-modern sensibilities. Just the mention of circumcision makes many of us queasy. Some of the explanations by today's mores and folkways are chauvinistic. (Ladies, please don't get mad with me and the other men of Antioch.)

God told Moses to return to Egypt and free the children of Israel. On his way to Egypt, God tracked him down and tried to kill him. Just when it seems safe to go back to Egypt, the One who is sending him back is now trying to slay him. The Bible does not say how God intended to kill him. Perhaps Moses had to wrestle with the angel of death, or perhaps he was suddenly afflicted with some deadly disease. However, the real question is not how God assaulted Moses, but why? What possible reason could God have for attacking Moses, upon which His whole plan for Israel's deliverance depended? Moses was the one who was called to lead God's people out of Egypt.

Perhaps this was the culmination of several conversations God had with Moses about circumcising his son, and Moses in disobedience refused. Maybe he and Zipporah did not want to circumcise the child because of the pain it would inflict. Since he had been away from his people for forty years, maybe he had forgotten the significance of the ritual.

Zipporah took charge and took a flint knife and circumcised the son who had not been circumcised. She then declared to Moses, "You are a Bloody Bridegroom." After she made that declaration the wrath of God was set aside and Moses was not slain.

Questions abound! Was the punishment or chastisement too harsh? Did God really want to kill him or just teach him a lesson? An all-powerful Being does not have to try to do anything; He just makes it happen. This text engenders many questions, that we will understand by and by. Then it will not matter, because we will be too busy praising God and walking the streets of gold. Now, let's look at what we do understand and extract some spiritual and practical truths.

Exposition

1. God Expects Leaders To Obey Him And Be An Example.

(Moses Had To Get His House Right Before He Could Get Israel Right.)

(This Is A Challenge To All Leaders – Including Your Pastor.)

(God Is Tough On Leaders.)

2. Sometimes You Have To Act Courageously And Decisively.

(Zipporah Did What Moses Should Have Done.)

(Her Action Was Genuine Support Of Moses.)

(Maybe Moses Was Too Close To Death To Respond.)

3. Moses Was Saved From God's Wrath By The Shed Blood Of A Substitute.

(Moses Was Saved By The Blood Of His Son.)

(We Are Saved By The Blood Of God's Only Begotten Son.)

(It Will Always Take Some Blood To Remit Sin.)

Closing Thoughts.

On this communion day, I will close with the words of a very familiar spiritual:

"I know it was the blood,

I know it was the blood,

I know it was the blood for me.

One day when I was lost

He died upon the cross.

I know it was the blood for me."

Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

End Notes:

1. Circumcision was the distinguishing mark of God's people, a sign indicating membership in the covenant community. It went all the way back to the patriarchs. (See Genesis 17:1-27.) A man could not father a child without thinking of the covenant and his responsibility to pass the faith to his children. The covenant was ever before him, even when he relieved himself and exercised his biological function. Later on, the prophets said there must also be circumcision of the heart. (See Jeremiah 4:4.) Many believe that in the New Covenant, baptism takes the place of ritualistic circumcision.

2. I will try my best to explain this delicately. Ladies, try not to be offended. If you are offended, I understand. In this culture, on the wedding night there was always the question of the virginity of the bride. Nobody was concerned about the virginity of the groom. That was unfair. During the consummation, if blood was produced, then it validated her virginity. Then the groom would yell out of the window, "I am a bloody bridegroom." He was proud that he was the first to be intimate with her. The blood-stained white linen sheet was proof of her purity and would be displayed upon request to anyone who doubted her virginity. Sometimes, the groom would take the sheet, a token of her purity, and run through the streets displaying it. (See Psalm 19: 5.) When

Zipporah told Moses, “You are a bloody husband,” she was saying what he said on the wedding night. This was a sigh of relief for everyone. Everyone, including his and her parents, was on pins and needles until her virginity was verified and announced. The groom knew she was a virgin and she was relieved in the fact that he knew. If the groom, in his opinion, felt she was not a virgin, the marriage was immediately annulled. This would bring embarrassment to her family. I know this is strange for our culture. Some say her statement was made out of anger and disgust. I believe, like many scholars, that it was made out of relief. Now, they could get on with their lives. In summary, Zipporah was equating the saving power of the blood of a bride with the saving power of the blood from the circumcision. They connected and equated things in their culture that we do not normally connect or equate in our culture.

There is foreshadowing in this text. Remember all Scripture eventually points to Jesus, just as the water of all creeks and rivers eventually runs to the ocean. Just as the blood of an innocent virgin saves the marriage and the blood from the circumcision of Moses’s son saved him, likewise, the blood of Jesus saves us from eternal separation from our Creator.

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