

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Broadcast Date: 22 July 2012

No. T0738

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Some coverings of Scripture: Tabernacle Coverings 2 - Goat's hair, ram's skins, badger skins

It's almost certain that each of us have been camping under canvas at some point in our lives. Here's a little poem about it.

*Hammers drive in plastic poles;
Wooden pegs that fit in holes.
Canvas sheet to spread on high;
Ground sheets laid to keep you dry.
Guys of rope or nylon too;
All to build a home for you.
Water chilled to wash the face;
Toilet bucket in its place.
Mattresses of airy foam;
Sleeping bags that snore and groan.
Such is camping! Oh, what fun!!!
I'll be glad when camp is done!*

Some people have camping in their blood and can't get enough of it. Others look upon it as a necessary evil and are chuffed when their camping holiday is over and they can return to the comfort of their homes. But have you ever thought about God as a camper? One who camped among His chosen people Israel in a tent or, as the Bible calls it, a tabernacle. The details of this tabernacle or temporary dwelling place are given in Exodus 26-40. It was not only a temporary dwelling place, but also a mobile one. It was designed in such a way that it could be dismantled, moved and set up again at a new site. In our talk today, we will continue to look at the typical meanings of some of the coverings used in this tabernacle.

Before considering the coverings themselves, we need to see, in simple terms, what is meant by "typical" teaching. I'm sure that when you were at primary school, you would, at some time, have been seated on a chair with a light shining across your face so that its shadow appeared on a piece of paper pinned to the wall. A partner would carefully draw around the shadow. You would then take the paper and paint it black so that you had a silhouette of your profile. People visiting the classroom could look at the silhouette and recognise it as you. Typical teaching is like such a shadow. It reveals the general appearance of the original when light has been cast upon it.

In our case today, it is teaching that reveals Christ when the light of other Bible references is cast upon the object. For example, in the New Testament book of John, we find Jesus called His own body a temple (John 2:18-22). In other words, God dwelt in Him by the power of the Holy Spirit while He moved about here on earth. So, we can see that there is an immediate parallel between Christ and the Old Testament tabernacle. The *shadow* is the tabernacle and the *substance* is Christ. It also has a secondary meaning because it is a picture of the house of God today, namely, the church in which God dwells by His Spirit. In this talk, we will emphasise the teaching of the tabernacle coverings to Christ Himself.

The coverings of the tabernacle are found in the Exodus 26. They include:

- the curtains of fine twined linen, their colours and the cherubim;
- the curtains of goats' hair;
- the covering of rams' skins dyed red; and
- the badgers' skin covering.

Last week's talk covered the first of these. We will now look at the others as given in Exodus 26:7-14 where God is speaking to Moses: "And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair to be a covering upon the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make. The length of one curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and the eleven curtains shall be all of one measure. And thou shalt couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shalt double the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tabernacle. And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the one

curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops in the edge of the curtain which coupleth the second. And thou shalt make fifty taches of brass, and put the taches into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one. And the remnant that remaineth of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remaineth, shall hang over the backside of the tabernacle. And a cubit on the one side, and a cubit on the other side of that which remaineth in the length of the curtains of the tent, it shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it. And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins."

We immediately see from the Bible reading that a good deal of detail is given concerning the goats' hair curtains; but only a little about the rams' skins and the badgers' skins. So let's examine them in the order given in the passage.

The "goats' hair" curtains come first. The word "hair" is omitted in the original; but has been put in the Authorised Version on the grounds of the reference in Exodus 35:26: "All the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair." Only the hair of the goats could be spun. In fact, goats' hair is used today to form fine fabrics such as mohair, cashmere and angora. In determining the typical meaning of goats' hair, we must examine scripture references that relate to "goats" and to "hair".

In Exodus 12:5 we find that the Passover lamb may have been taken from sheep or goats. We are immediately transported to 1 Corinthians 5:7 where we read "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us". Scripture is amazing! That lamb of so long ago was a preview of a far greater Lamb that was to follow. It is a shadow of Christ hanging on the cross and His death providing the means (His blood) whereby God can protect us from the judgment that will fall upon this world and upon Satan.

In Leviticus 1:10 we find that a goat could be offered as a burnt offering which gave pleasure to God. The one who offered the lamb was identified with it by placing his hand upon it. The spotlessness of the lamb was attributed to the offerer. God could therefore accept him through the offering. So it is for all who trust in the perfect sacrifice of Christ. His death makes them acceptable to God.

Similarly, this was the case with the peace offering (Leviticus 3:1-17). God has made peace through the blood of the cross of Christ (Colossians 1:20). Those sinners who believe are reconciled to God. Those who were His enemies are now His allies.

Again, goats could be used in the sin offering, reminding us that Christ was made sin on Calvary's cross so that all who believe could be made righteous in the sight of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Do You remember His cry from the cross during those three hours of darkness: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34) His holy soul was enduring the punishment of God against our sin. God poured out on His own Son the judgment that should have been ours. We can now say, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin" (see 1 John 1:7). Have you put your trust in Him and His work at Calvary?

The hymn writer, Albert Midlane expressed this truth in the following hymn:

*The perfect righteousness of God
Is witnessed in the Saviour's blood;
'Tis in the cross of Christ we trace
His righteousness, yet wondrous grace.*

*God could not pass the sinner by,
Justice demands that he should die;
But in the cross of Christ we see
How God can save, yet righteous be.*

*The judgment fell on Jesus' head,
'Twas in His blood sin's debt was paid;
Stern justice can demand no more,
And mercy can dispense her store.*

*The sinner who believes is free,
Can say, The Saviour died for me;
Can point to the atoning blood
And say, "This made my peace with God."*

In Deuteronomy 14:4 we find the goat was a clean animal which emphasises the sinlessness of Christ. In Him there was no sin (1 John 3:5). It was because of this, He was the only Person who could be a sacrifice for sin. This is why, on the

great Day of Atonement (found in Leviticus 16:1-34), we find a goat for a sin offering along a scapegoat which was led into the wilderness symbolically carrying away the sins of the nation of Israel.

Daniel 8:21 says, "...the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king." If we consider the Lord Jesus on a parallel line, He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He will one day reign over the world that previously rejected Him. In that day the glory of God will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (see Habakkuk 2:14).

In Hebrews 11:37 we see people of faith, rejected by this world, were sometimes dressed in goatskins as they lived in dens and caves. The Lord Jesus Himself was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief (see Isaiah 53:3).

In 1 Samuel 19:13 the hair of goats was used to form a pillow or head rest. We immediately see that there is a future rest for the people of God which is grounded on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:9).

If we focus our search on goats' hair rather than goats, we can see that the colour of the hair was dark. This is intimated by the bride's hair in the Song of Solomon 4:11 being likened to a flock of goats. Linking this scripture with Song of Solomon 5:1, we find her describing herself as black as the tents of Kedar. Goats' hair was (and still is) used in the making of tents in the Middle-Eastern countries. In the scriptures we read, the goats' hair curtains are joined together to form the "tent". However, last week we saw how the curtains of fine-twined linen formed the "tabernacle" itself. The tabernacle is the place of dwelling. As indicated previously, the body of the Lord Jesus Christ was the dwelling place of God on earth. It was the divine residence. God was in Christ and all the fruit of the Spirit of God was found in Him. However, the word "tent" is used as that seen from a distance. It indicates the physical body of Christ Himself which would make us think of the way in which He came into this world. We read in Hebrews 10:5: "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but abody hast thou prepared me..." The "tent" emphasises His humanity. Both are beautifully seen in John Wesley's hymn entitled: "*Hark, the Herald Angels Sing*". The third verse reads:

*Christ by highest heav'n adored
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

Goats' hair was also used for a material called "sackcloth". In Revelation 6:12 we read: "The sun became black as sackcloth of hair." This clothing was worn to depict mourning and penance (Matthew 11:21). Hence, we see that Jesus mourned for the sin of His chosen people and of the world. He came to deal with that question of sin. Additionally, this clothing of hair was a mark of the prophets. For example, in Zechariah 13:4 we find, "Neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive." The rough garment is a garment of hair. The raiment of John the Baptist was of camels' hair, similar to this (Matthew 3:4). The "two witnesses" (mentioned in Revelation 11:3) gave their prophetic testimony "clothed in sackcloth".

From these references, we also see that prophets were raised up in days of spiritual failure or weakness. The rough clothing they wore was the badge of mourning and repentance. This would be in keeping with their own mourning before God and the preaching to get the people to repent. It is worthy to note that a prophet spoke the word of God to certain people, at special times and dealt with specific issues relating to their relationship with God Himself. The words that they spoke often included predictions to be imminently fulfilled or to be fulfilled in the far-distant future.

At this point, we may ask: "Was the Lord Jesus Christ a prophet?" Well, if we go back to the days of Moses we read: "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you" (Acts 3:22 quoting Deuteronomy 18:15). This is repeated a few verses later: "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him" Deuteronomy 18:18-19)

When the Lord Jesus had miraculously fed the five thousand (John 6:1-15) from a gift of five barley loaves, and two small fishes, the people who saw it said, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world" (John 6:14).

The Samaritan woman (at Sychar's well, John 4:1-42) realised that He was a prophet when He pinpointed her sin (John 4:19). However, she went even further witnessing to those in the city that He was the Christ (John 4:25). Those who heard this went to speak with Jesus and accommodated Him for a couple of days. After being in His presence for so long, they declared that He was indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world (John 4:42).

The man who had been blind from his birth (who had been wonderfully healed by the Lord Jesus, see John 9:1-41) witnessed that Jesus was a Man sent by God. When the Pharisees heard of this miracle (which had taken place on the Sabbath Day) they were angry and interrogated the man and his parents. It was during this episode that the blind man witnessed that Jesus was a prophet (John 9:17). The Pharisees treated the man despicably; but Jesus found him and revealed Himself to him as the Son of God.

The eleven curtains of the tent were joined together with couplets of brass. We can see that gold speaks of the glory of the Godhead and silver speaks of the glory of redemption; but brass speaks of the glory of righteousness - a righteousness that endures the testing judgment of God. Jesus endured the heaviest of judgments at the cross where the wrath of God was poured out upon Him because of our sin.

So the *main* typical teaching of the tent formed by the goats' hair curtains includes three aspects:

1. Christ is the Son of God who came to earth as a man;
2. He served as the predicted prophet of God; and
3. He became God's appointed sacrifice for sin.

We will now briefly consider the covering of rams' skins dyed red. The Hebrew word used for "ram" relates to its strength. The Lord Jesus was engaged in casting out devils and spoke this parable: "...How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house." The strong man He mentioned was Satan; but a stronger one came and bound Him - the Lord Jesus himself. So we can turn to Hebrews 2:14-15 and read: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." This shows that the apparent weakness of Christ in dying, has destroyed the devil. It is redemption by power. We were the devil's hostages. Christ has delivered us from his clutches. Samuel Whitlock Gandy wrote:

*By weakness and defeat,
He won the meed and crown;
Trod all our foes beneath His feet
By being trodden down.*

This is supported by the word "red" in "rams' skins dyed red". The word used for "red" is found in Nahum 2:3 where we read: "The shield of his mighty men is made red..." So we again see the Mighty One who is Head of every principality and power (Colossians 2:10).

The ram was often used in various offerings of the Old Testament; but a notable example is found in the offering for the consecration of the priests (Exodus 29:15-26). Here, the blood of the offering was not only sprinkled on the altar, but also placed on the ear, thumb and great toe of those who were to be priests. The ear suggests obedience to God's word. The thumb indicates service in the will of God. The toe suggests the manner of walk or the personal conduct of the anointed one in relationship to God. It forcibly reminds us that Christ was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (see Philippians 2:8). He always did the will of His God and Father. His conduct was without sin and perfectly dignified before God. He is our Great High Priest in resurrection. He is a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. One who intercedes for us, supports us and sympathises with us.

In order for there to be rams' skins for the tabernacle, there had to be the deaths of the rams. These occurred in most of the offerings of old. Rams were used in the burnt offerings particularly. The burnt offering represents the virtues of Christ in His death rising to God as a sweet smell so that the offerer might be accepted by God. We who believe are made the righteousness of God in Christ. God accepts us through His death.

Another New Testament parallel to this is found in Hebrews 9:14: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Here He performs a priestly act in offering Himself. What a Saviour we have!

This brings us to the covering of badgers' skins. Turning to Ezekiel 16:10, we find Jerusalem clothed with the Lord's beauty. He says to her: "I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk." The sandals worn by this personified city were beautiful. It expresses how pleasing her walk or conduct should be to God. We see the same things in the description of Jerusalem as the bride

of the Lord in Song of Solomon 7:1: "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!" So how do we apply this to Christ? In Isaiah 52:7 we find: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

The Lord Jesus is the Word (see Revelation 19:13) - the very expression of the nature and will of God. He has revealed the heart of the Father to us; He is the centre of the good news preached; He has died in order that we might have peace with God and the peace of God in our hearts. His conduct was perfect in every way. May God give us the grace to follow His steps.

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