

Scripture: Exodus 34:29-35

Text: Exodus 34:29b....".....the skin
his face shone because he had been
talking with God."

Theme or Topic: Shining Faces

Proposition: The Book of Exodus
points out that they are indeed blessed
and happy, of "shining faces," who feel
close to God.

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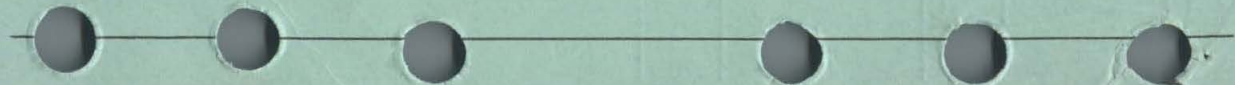
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Introduction:

1. The ~~current~~ motion picture "The Ten Commandments" ~~was~~ is a colorful and extravagantly-produced piece of entertainment. Its attention to detail of dress, building styles, social classes and customs of Egypt of several thousand years ago is amazing. It presents Moses as accurately as possible from the Biblical record and then adds much further imagined detail. In fact, this truly-extraordinary film should more accurately be called "Moses," for it is far more about him than about the Ten Commandments.

2. What it does show about the Ten Commandments ~~is~~, I believe ~~and fear~~, ^{some few that} very inaccurate and very harmful. If ~~they~~ ^{THE} were ~~thus~~ presented by magical writing of flashing lightning while Moses cowered in the background they would ~~do~~ ^{do} a little ~~more~~ ^{more} to a people who were not similarly cowered by supernatural displays of power.

3. I ~~prefer to~~ believe that Moses ^{10 COMMANDMENTS} received them as a result of days of meditation and quiet communion with God on the mountain-top. There the accumulated experience of ages of humans could pass through his mind. If the Ten Commandments are the work of ~~God~~ ^{God} given in a natural and logical way, just as God gives truth to us today, it is easier to see why they have remained

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accepted and in force for thousands of years. Not because God will slap down offender, but because they make sense in everyday life. They are the will of God in a natural way for the creatures of His making, His people on earth. They work, and they were realized for us, through the final summarization of a man named Moses, as a result of centuries of human experience.

4. Just as the person and method by which the Ten Commandments were given so often seem misinterpreted, so the true central theme of the Book of Exodus in which they are found is misinterpreted. We ~~would~~ here attempt to make Exodus and its meaning clearer. We base our statements on the published works of full-time Bible Scholars. We believe that our Scripture selection of today presents the chief theme of the Book of Exodus, and will sort of summarize our thinking for us.

I. Exodus -- its background and chief purposes.

1. "Exodus" is an English word given to the second book in our Bible by the translators some 350 to 400 years ago. It is a title for the book which they did not get from the original texts but which they thought described the Book. Exodus refers to the marching out en

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masse of a large group of people. As such it is a word, or title, which does not do full justice to the subject matter of this second Biblical book.

The word "Exodus" does not disclose the central idea of the book, for less than half of it deals with Israel's departure from Egypt. The larger part of Exodus is concerned with the beginning and organization of the common life of the Israelites. Not Moses, the leader and lawgiver, nor Israel the elect and redeemed people and nation, stands at the heart of the book. God is the central thought. The controlling theme is the revelation of God's power, which is illustrated by His victory over Pharaoh, and which points to His ~~lordship~~ lordship over the universe. The action and triumph of God is the center from which comes the whole book of Exodus.

2. Exodus belongs to "the five books of Moses," or the Pentateuch, which are the first five books of our Bible. Exodus is not a history of early Israel, in any strict sense. It is rather in exposition of the meaning of that history for Israel. It is an interpretation of Israel's faith.

3. For instance, the plagues of Egypt should not be read as an exact, detailed history. There have been many efforts to rationalize these fantastic stories. Modern scholars have sought to

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Exodus 7:27-35.....5
provide a natural explanation for each of the ten plagues. One scholar does so for the first six plagues like this: The fetid, blood-red water of the Nile River with its decaying fish bred a crop of frogs. The decomposing frogs caused swarms of insects which carried the diseases of the 3rd and 4th plagues. These insects spread the diseases of the fifth and sixth plagues.

Such a procedure to explain the plagues is not necessary or good. It causes us to forget the real purpose of the stories. It shows a concern for historical detail at the cost of truth and meaning. To be sure, many of the stories reflect something of the natural conditions and hazards of life in Egypt. Some of them ~~probably~~ rest on actual events that helped the escape of the Israelites from Egypt, an escape in which they saw the hand of God. But Exodus now presents a series of piously decorated accounts woven together in an elaborate and artistic series of narratives. It is a symbolic thing, and not necessarily an accurate historical account. It points to Israel's faith resting on the historic experience of its escape from slavery. It aims at showing that not Pharaoh or the gods of Egypt but the living God of Israel makes nature serve man.

4. In the Old Testament Exodus has a ~~role~~ role

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role comparable to that of the Gospels in the New Testament. Its focus is on the historic event on which the community of Israel was built, just as the New Testament ~~gospels~~ focus on Jesus the being around whom the Christian faith is built. Exodus is a book of faith. The central idea of this faith is the power of God. This notion of God's power, freedom and sovereignty is a persistent idea from then on in Biblical history and faith. Later interpretations of God which point to His justice, forgiveness, love and compassion, always do so on the assumption of His power. However, in Exodus God expresses His power in such a way that it is clear that He is a responsible and moral Being.

5. We have chosen the section of Exodus which is our Scripture because it seems to point up or summarize this key idea of the whole book, God's power and His interest in His people. Also, this Scripture has for us an affirmation of what the experience of God's power can do for us. Let us look at our particular passage from Exodus which is our Scripture for the day, and let it speak and suggest to us ideas of value for us.

Moses experience of God caused him to radiate a special something.

1. In our particular Scripture is the account of Moses coming down from the

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a way that ones face literally seems to shine. And the shining is of a sort that makes others want to have a similar experience of God.

Conclusion:

1. The Book of Exodus, telling of the historic background of Israel's escape from Egypt by the help of God, points out that God is all-powerful, moral and responsible. This is its central message and purpose, to give the basis for belief in this supreme Being who is God, and who cares for us, the human race.

2. Moses' face-to-face experience with this God caused him to appear so different that it was written "the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God."

3. There are people of today, too, whose radiance is such after an experience with God that we can truly say their faces shine and are an incentive to others to come closer to God.

4. We would summarize all this by saying that the Book of Exodus points out that they are indeed blessed and happy, of "shining faces," who feel close to God.

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mountain where he had been with God for some time. He brought down with him the tablets of law and commandments which were to replace those he once broke in anger when he had come down from the mountain to find the people untrue to God (worshipping a golden calf). "Moses did not know that the skin of his face was shown because he had been talking with God," the Scripture says. The people were scared to come near him until he veiled his face, which he did for them. Later when he went into the tent of the Lord, or the tabernacle, he would unveil his face, the story says, and stand face-to-face before God.

2. The verb translated "shown" occurs only twice in Hebrew literature. It is a verb derived from the noun which means "horn." Some of the older painters, like Michelangelo, not knowing the difference between the noun meaning "horn" and the verb meaning "shone", assumed that Moses had horns to mark his special experience with God and so painted him. But the actual Hebrew means that Moses' face shone or glowed like rays of lightning after his contact with God. The idea of the veil Moses then used when talking with people was that the reflection of God's glory on Moses' face was too sacred to be gazed at by human eyes.

3. Moses's shining face can suggest many ideas to us. The one which is true

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to the Scripture is that

III. An individual who experiences God often does have a special radiance which is apparent to others.

1. Many a doctor and minister can testify that the shining face was not only to be seen in Moses. Often they and others have been confronted with it shining on them from beds of pain so that they too seemed to need the intervention of a veil to protect them from the piercing splendor of the divine soul shining through the frail body.

2. In times when people were put to death for their Christian faith, or martyred, it was noted that the face of the agonizing sufferer sometimes seemed ~~not~~ alight with a flame more brilliant than that of the flames which surrounded him.

3. In simpler ways the same experience noticed among more common and humble folks. One child said "Grandma must sleep in heaven, because she is always so happy at breakfast." The epitaph of a New England minister states that even to meet him on the street made one feel that life was more worthwhile. There are people of shining face whose faith takes them that way, to be found all about

through Jesus Christ

4. There is something about an experience of God's presence that is exhilarating, uplifting, and inspiring in such

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