

CREATED GAY

The Tent of God

by Gary Simpson

Genesis 25:1-14 (KJV) Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them. The length of one curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and every one of the curtains shall have one measure. The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and other five curtains shall be coupled one to another. And thou shalt make loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in the uttermost edge of another curtain, in the coupling of the second. Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is in the coupling of the second; that the loops may take hold one of another. And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches: and it shall be one tabernacle.

7And 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.

11And 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.

My initial reaction to this text was not one of awe. The text did not really blow off my socks. The passage sounds like instructions to tradesmen, to tentmakers and to seamstresses. While I respect and envy those in the trades, those who are really good with their hands, I do not enjoy that kind of work and have little interest in building things. I would much rather curl up in a corner and read scientific periodicals or theological commentaries.

But when one looks closer at the text, one finds that the Lord was revealing a lot about God in the way the Sacred Tent was to be built. From the blueprint for the tradesmen, we are able to catch a few insights into the things of God. In the very construction of the Sacred Tent, God was subtly teaching people about a God of love, a God who will pay the ultimate sacrifice for sin for humanity. The subtle teachings ended at Calvary. Then it was clear for all to see.

All of the messages are from a set of instructions. Perhaps, that means all people should read instructions. I am not sure about that. As a person who rarely wants to read the instructions, I am going to try to ignore that.

From the curtains, the tent coverings, we are able to learn about God, about being in Christ and about the Christian walk of faith.

There were four curtains in the Tent.¹ The linen curtain was the inside curtain and you had to be inside the Tent Tabernacle to see it. The linen curtain represents the beauty of Christ, a beauty that cannot be seen by the world, a beauty Believers can see.² According to the description, the linen curtain never touched the ground. A case can be made that the full beauty of God will only be seen in the heavenly.

The goat's hair curtain touched the ground and is symbolic of Christ's death.³ Just as the curtain touched the ground, Jesus touched the ground, touched the ordinary. Jesus' life and ministry touched people in the workplaces, in the markets, in the ordinary places of life.

Ram skins are a sacrifice.⁴ This is fairly obvious, because the ram has to give his life to provide the skins. The ram skins are dyed red, the color of blood. The ram skins are a symbol of the strength and the power of Calvary.⁵

The outer layer was of badger's skin. Your Bible might translate this as "fine leather."⁶ Badger skin had no real beauty.⁷ When people looked at the outside of the Tent Tabernacle, they saw a structure that had little beauty. The skin covering gives us a few insights. Like the badger skin, Jesus did not attract people because of His beauty.⁸

To put this in common language, Jesus was not hot. He would not have been voted Mr. Universe, the sexiest man in the Empire, Twink of Israel, Mr. Gay or Mr. Bisexual Roman Empire. Straight ladies and men who love men would not have been swooning for Jesus. Jesus was not the Rock Hudson, a Brad Pitt or a Tom Daley of His day. He would not have been in a boy band. In fact, the Bible gives us the impression that Jesus was a little homely. **Isaiah 53:2** He wasn't some handsome king. Nothing about the way he looked made him attractive to us. When we read the Bible, we understand why Jesus was born in Bethlehem, not in Beth Holly Wood, not in Beth Castro.

¹ J. Vernon McGee. *Thru the Bible With J. Vernon McGee*. Vol. 1. (Pasadena, California: Thru the Bible Radio, 1981), 284.

² McGee, 285.

³ McGee, 285.

⁴ James Smith. *Handfuls on Purpose*. Vol. 1. (Edinburgh: Pickering and Inglis, n.d.), 17.

⁵ McGee, 285.

⁶ The NRSV translates it "fine leather."

⁷ McGee, 285.

⁸ Smith, 18 and McGee, 285, cite Isaiah 53:2.

God took the form of an average person in the physical form of Jesus. God wanted us to follow Jesus, because of Jesus' teachings, Jesus' ministry and Calvary. God did not want us chasing after Jesus because of Jesus' beauty.

The Son of God may have been average looking, at best, and at worst, possibly ugly. God chose to reveal God through an average looking body, because God loves average looking bodies and average looking people. If God did not love average looking people, God would not have created so many average looking people. That can be a source of comfort to those of us who feel a profound sense of disappointment when we look in the mirror and when we compare ourselves with others. Perhaps, God is best revealed through average people, because average people better let people see past the human and see the divine.

From the curtains, we can gain insights into what it means to be Believers. And those insights are legit, because we are also a tent tabernacle, a portable tabernacle of God. **1 Corinthians 3:16. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?**

Like Christ, we might be a bit homely on the outside. Our unattractiveness is not due to our poor physical appearance, but is due to our human nature. People look at our lives, they may see little that is appealing. We are not spiritual Brad Pitts. In fact, we are rather homely looking to the world. Those who know us see our warts, our failures and our problems. The eyes of people focus on the badgers skin outer layer of our human tabernacles.

Fortunately, that is not what God sees. The spirit of Jesus, our Savior, lives in us. That means God is looking at the inside of the tabernacle. God sees the beauty on the inside when God looks at you, God sees the linen, in blue, scarlet and purple. The ugly stuff, God does not see.

The blue in the linen curtain represents the sky, the heavenly and shows our hope for eternal life. Our spiritual lives hold to the hope in the heavenly and our behavior starts to reflect that hope, as the Lord continues to move in our lives.

The scarlet or red represents the color of the earth. The red shows that we are human, that our feet touch the ground. We are not so isolated and insulated from the problems of the world, the stresses of life, that people cannot relate to us. In fact, people see us struggling with the same family, school, work, community and health problems that everybody else faces. And somehow, through the badger skin, they manage to see the blue, the hope of a heavenly in how we respond to the life problems we face.

Red and blue are mixed to create purple.⁹ The mixing of the trials of humanity and the hope of the heavenly creates purple, one of the most regal and royal colors. When people see that God planted the heavenly in our lives, they see the wonderful color of royalty in us.

Goat's hair is white. This curtain shows the Believer's privilege.¹⁰ Because of Jesus' ministry, we are given His perfect and spotless life. Our sins are gone. The white goat's hair also represents how Christians intercede on behalf of others, just as Christ intercedes for humanity.

⁹ Smith, 16.

¹⁰ Smith, 17.

The ram's skins represent sacrifice. You cannot have a ram's skin without a ram being sacrificed.¹¹ In our lives, the ram's skin represents the sacrifices God makes through us to reach people, to touch lives. Every time the Lord touches someone through you, the ram's skin is visible, the sacrifice of Calvary is evident.

The inside layers of the tent are splendid and those magnificent layers show the spectacular work of Creator God in God's fabulous rainbow people.

From Hebrew, we understand the word translated tent has another meaning. In Hebrew, the word tent shares the same root as the word shekinah.¹² The link from the tent tabernacle to shekinah makes sense to me. The tent tabernacle is where the children of Israel understood the glory of God was abiding. God is present in you. **2 Corinthians 6:16 For we are the temple of the living God!**¹³ You are a living tabernacle of God, a place where the presence and glory of God is made known to the world. You are the rainbow shekinah of God.

¹¹ Smith, 17.

¹² Nahum M. Sarna. *The JPS Commentary: Exodus*. (Philadelphia: Jewish Pub. Society, 1991), 154.

¹³ 2 Corinthians 6:16, GNB.