

The Camels Are Coming

by John Follette

The sermon teaches that trials and discipline are means of locomotion sent by God to build our character and bring us closer to Him, and that we must learn to accept and ride them to reach our spiritual goal of being with Christ.

Scripture: Ephesians 1:3

Topics: "Spiritual Discipline", "Dispensational Theology"

Description

John Follette delves into the story of Rebekah and the camels, drawing spiritual lessons from the relationship between the camels and the characters in the narrative. He highlights the prophetic patterns in chapters 22, 23, and 24, symbolizing God's movements in dispensational matters. The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's divine program and the period of discipline and training for believers. Through the analogy of camels, Follette encourages listeners to accept and ride their 'camels' - representing trials, hardships, and spiritual discipline - as means to deepen their fellowship with Christ and grow in character.

Transcript

The spiritual lesson I wish to bring to you from this story is based upon a dramatic and picturesque incident in the life of Rebekah; namely, her dealing with the camels. Therefore I will not go into detail with the beautiful analogy of spiritual truths we find in this wonderful chapter. The general teaching, I am sure, is familiar to most of us. However, we might suggest a few points of interest to build up a background of understanding for the camels and their part in the romantic adventure.

The first thing we notice in this story is the relation of the 22nd, 23rd and 24th chapters in their general teaching. Here we find a prophetic or dispensational pattern by way of illustration. In chapter 22 we have the story of the offering up of Isaac, then in chapter 23 the death of Sarah, and in chapter 24 the servant is sent forth to find a bride for him who in a way has been raised from the dead. These three chapters in a broad and sweeping way suggest God's movements in dispensational matters. Chapter 22 suggests the ministry and death of Christ, chapter 23 the setting aside of Israel, and chapter 24 the ministry of the Holy Spirit in calling out the Bride for Christ. It is well that we keep this divine program in mind lest we be tempted to inaugurate one suggested by over-anxious hearts who desire to establish a kingdom instead of training lives for a kingdom.

Acts 15:14-16--"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, after this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up."

From the whole trend of prophetic utterance and prophecy already fulfilled, we see this is not a day or period for the material establishment of a kingdom, but the establishment of a kingdom in the hearts of His people. Especially is it the period of discipline and training of believers for a future ministry and fuller expression of life in a new age. Scriptures such as Eph. 1:3, 4 and Rom. 8:28, 29 suggest the lofty objective of the Spirit to conform and train.

In the story we find Abraham represents God the Father, while Isaac represents Christ, the Son, and the servant represents the Holy Spirit. One is tempted to relate suggestive bits of truth found in nearly every verse, but I will try not to give too much exposition and restrict the teaching to the camels. The first mention of them is in verse 10. "And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master and departed." Here we find where the camels came from--they are a part of the equipment sent by Abraham. Then in verse 11 we find who has control of them. "And he made the camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening "

In passing let us notice it is the servant who takes the initiative in greeting and interesting Rebekah. "No men can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44). Also let us remember what momentous results may often hinge upon seemingly insignificant doings. Her act of courtesy in verse 18 and offer (spontaneous and from the heart) to water the camels opened the door to her romance and great blessing. Heb. 13:2--"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for there-by some have entertained angels unawares."

When we consider Rebekah as the called out Christian in training by the Holy Spirit for deeper fellowship with the heavenly bridegroom, we see many lovely bits of truth tucked away in the story. In verse 22 we find the servant begins to reward her--golden earrings, bracelets, and ten shekels of gold. Gold, as we know, always means divinity--the heavenly, divine qualities. The earrings tell us of devotion in loving service (Psa. 40:6), and also the listening ear (Psa. 45:10). Her ears are tuned to heavenly things. Hands suggest service; so the golden bracelets mean spiritual service rendered with correct motive and from the heart. The ten shekels of gold mean the divine nature of which she is now a partaker of divine supply for her good. Again in verses 53 and 54 we are told of a further rewarding. Silver means redemption; so she has jewels of silver or the redemptive blessings of her bridegroom. Also jewels of gold or the divine blessings from heaven. The raiment suggests the covering she has in Christ's atonement His righteousness now covers her.

The brother and mother receive "precious things." This is the overflow of blessing from God in any heart or community where Christ is truly enthroned. Many a home has been blest with "precious things" merely by the presence of a saved or consecrated member. So also has a nation been blest and honored by the faith of a few.

Let us note in verse 58 that the whole matter of Rebekah's going and the full flowering of her romance depended upon her personal answer. She said, "I will go." The whole matter is very personal and I am sure God wants it to be so. It was a great step of faith to be sure. She had to leave kin and home and had really never seen the lover to whom she was going. She must trust implicitly in the faithfulness of the

servant. "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

We now find another reference to the camels. Verse 61: "... and they rode upon the camels..." This brings us more directly to the question of the camels and what they mean. But before we can explain about them let us clear up a few thoughts concerning the objective of this journey and the design of the romance.

So far in the illustration we find the servant fully represents both the person and work of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation as He faithfully deals with the heart in its quest for the heavenly bridegroom. Also Rebekah pictures very well the Christian in his response to the Holy Spirit and his hunger for Isaac, his beloved. Let us remember, as Christians seeking deeper fellowship with Christ and fuller revelation of His Word, that spiritual Life and Christian character wrought in us becomes the means of appreciation of Christ and His bridegroom fellowship. The deep desire to see our Isaac and to be with Him is in other words the deep desire for fellowship and capacity for revelation. Therefore whatsoever deepens my fellowship and gives me spiritual life and character will be in turn the means used by God to carry my heart from one phase to another and still another of spiritual understanding.

God must continually use means to bring my heart from one plane or realm to closer relations and nearness to Christ. The very means He uses will be such as will build up my spiritual life and character. The stronger the character and deeper the life in Him the nearer I am brought to my adorable Lord, my heavenly Isaac. Thus must I cherish every means He may use to bring me to

His side. According to the philosophy of God's Word in relation to the question of Christian character we find that the character built by the Holy Spirit is quite a different thing from the divine nature which comes to the believer when he is born again. One is a gift, the other a result of proving. Character is built by proving; trials, hardships, sorrow, trouble, and spiritual discipline.

Now I think we are able to understand what the camels are. In the story the camels were the means of locomotion to carry Rebekah the scheme. In verse 10 you will remember the camels were a part of Abraham's planning and were sent by him. To help you in this, read: Psa. 34:19; II Cor. 4:17; II Tim. 5:12; John 16:33; Rom. 5:3.

So let us not be foolish and pray for God to draw us nearer and bring our hearts to sweet fellowship and understanding of Isaac and then when He sends us a camel to carry us there want to shoot him. Never shoot your camels! What foolish creatures we are anyway! With one breath we pray God to draw us near, conform us to His image, and deepen our lives in God, and with the next breath we shout at the camel He has sent to answer our prayer. Don't you remember it is tribulation that worketh patience and not a sweet feeling at an altar service?

The story says Rebekah watered the camels--that is, she accepted them. What do you do with your camels? What a time we have explaining to God what these camels are and how they act. What a time driving them from our doors and asking God to chase them out of our yards. Listen I Never quarrel with a camel. They are most un-reasonable. All they seem to know is to drink. And how much they can hold! Some seem to have such capacity! Remember, Rebekah watered ten.

Have you not seen many of these ungainly creatures reaching out their necks and asking for water? How many times do we have to go down to the well and let down our bucket for a good draught of love or longsuffering, a bucket of patience or kindness, understanding, submission, forbearance and what not? How some camels can drink! We wonder if there can be any end to their thirst. Yes, there is. For the

sequel to the watering is found in verse 61---"And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way." So you see there is always a sequel and an answer to the thirst and watering.

But you must remember Rebekah did not ride them until she had watered them. To ride is to mount and be above the camel--he is under. Do you understand? She now makes the camel to serve her and he becomes a means to carry her to Isaac.

The camels are awkward and not so very easy to ride. There is an art to it and the secret of it is this---move with the camel and do not try to resist his momentum. For that is already established, so all you have to do is to yield to the sway and movement of the camel and you will soon learn to ride. Never resist the camel's momentum, for if you do it will make you sick and you will have a very hard time of it.

To help you ride the camels God has prodded saddles. He always has a saddle to fit any camel He sends you. Perhaps you have an old camel very hard to manage. He has taken seemingly barrels of drink, but at last you have learned how to water him and now you are about to ride. He may be in the form of a person who "just kills" you. He or she seems to grind on you so and makes you nervous, as you say, and out of patience. But now at last you have the victory and are able to ride him. You have drawn buckets and buckets of patience and long suffering for him and at last you see God in the matter and have willingly served him. Don't water a camel with a pout in your spirit for that always creates thirst and it takes ever so much longer to finish him up. Sing a good song as you let down your bucket and you hear it splash in the well of His grace. In this way his thirst will soon be slaked; then go get the saddle and ride.

Run down to the barn of God's Word and on the wall called James on the 4th row and peg 6 you will find a good saddle: "But He giveth more grace..." Just strap that onto his back and ride off. You will be surprised to know how well that saddle fits and how much easier the journey will be. He is now taking you to Isaac.

Yonder I see another camel that has been in your yard for months. You have given him a drink now and then but not enough to really satisfy his thirst--just enough to keep him quiet. He is the long-drawn-out trial and one seemingly without reason. Have a good square look at him and deal frankly with him. Knowing now what he is, just water him quickly and get you to the barn again and get a saddle, for you are ready to ride him. On the wall of II Corinthians, row 9 and peg 8, is your saddle: "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you: that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." It is such a fitting saddle---made to order--and so easily adjusted. Step in the stirrup, sister, and ride on.

Near me here I find a poor, weak camel. He is very wobbly and lame. He is the camel of your weak nature. He got dreadfully crippled you know in "the fall" and of course he never got over it. You always did want him to be big, strong and healthy, but alas! the poor nature at last developed knock knees. So now you are called upon to water him. Remember he is to be ridden and will take you a long, long way. So do not keep him off in one corner of the yard hidden behind a tree. If you do that he will always want a drink at the wrong time and as sure as you are alive he will bellow when you want a nice quiet time. Deal with him in all fairness and honesty. Water him though he may take barrels and barrels, for he is to be ridden. Go then to this wonderful barn of God's Word. There on the wall of 2 Corinthians, row 12 and peg 9, is one of the oldest and most famous saddles. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." I think there must have been thousands of people who used this saddle and yet there is not so much as a buckle broken on it. Paul rode it a long time and it carried him safely to his Lord.

And so they come, camels, camels, camels--there seems to be no end to them. There is another one yonder, a most evasive and uncertain creature. He just came from behind a bit of shrubbery and you are not sure what he is after. But perhaps you have learned how to deal with this camel--Temptation. There is also a saddle for him which perfectly fits his peculiar humps. On the wall of I Corinthians, row 10 and peg 13, is the one for him. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

And look! What is that poor, thin camel staggering along and so faint, not only from thirst but she is also hungry? And as we begin to feed and water her we are amazed at her capacity. This is the camel called Depression. How faithfully we have had to deal with her and how very trying she has been! I And lo and behold, there is another little camel behind her called, Recession. He is just the offspring of the old camel. But, thank God, there is also a saddle for her, too---on the wall of Philippians, row 4 and peg 19, we find the very one we need: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Let me ask you--what is your attitude toward your camels ? Can you interpret them in the light of His Word ? Let it shine upon them and you will learn how to water them and not to quarrel with them. Do not drive them away or think the devil is back of every unhappy situation or trial in your life. Remember in the story it was Abraham who sent them and it was the servant who made them kneel down at the well. You have a well what are you doing with it ?

To deny the camels are here is foolish. Look at the next old, brown fellow and say: "Well, good morning, Mr. Camel, I see you are very thirsty." He will probably snort (but don't mind that or try to correct him. He is only a camel and often they do such things). "How much water do you take? Just stand still here and I will water you, for I know in turn you are to serve me and carry me on a most desirable journey. So you see I want to water you well. And, too, Mr. Camel, I notice you are very heavily laden. Your master packed all those trappings on you when he sent you. I need not ask you what they are, for I know already. They are the gifts and jewels and precious tokens of his love and also the exquisite coverings he has sent to charm me and to adorn me for his presence. You may look ugly and ask for much water but you can't fool me. You are a great blessing sent in disguise. What! Another bucket? Yes, yes, there is plenty of water and the well is full; I will soon have your thirst satisfied. You are but a test of my faith--I shall soon ride you." And so accept him, water him and ride him.

There is another thought I like about the camels. It is found in verse 64: "And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel." Isn't that beautiful? The lifted eyes tell a story. And it was when she saw Isaac she lighted off the camel. She was seeing him and not a camel or the rough road.

There is no other means of locomotion. Had Rebekah seen merely a dusty, thirsty camel she might have sent it away and thus ruined her wonderful romance. Do not defeat your own prayers and heart's desire by misinterpreting God's methods of character building and spiritual culture. Trials are the food of the overcomer. Did not Joshua and Caleb of old say in regard to the enemy--"they be bread for us"? Bread is food for building. I am sure they had the right slant on the proposition.

This lesson from the camels is rather a picturesque form of telling a deep philosophy of life. Suffering and discipline are here and are for our good and not to defeat us. Let us learn how to use the camels sent to

carry us to our Isaac.

In verse 63 we are told, Isaac at eventide was walking through the field in meditation when he lifted up his eyes and beheld the camels coming. Is that not suggestive? The day is already far spent, the shadows of the evening are upon us, and the nations are wrapped in clouds of confusion. Our Beloved, too, is waiting. Long has He watched the movements on the old earth's stage and now in meditation while the twilight curtains fall, he looks for the returning camel train bringing His Bride. Outlined against the sunset of this dispensation may there be a caravan to please His expectant gaze. Shall we not then water our camels and ride them, knowing that they are only the means in God's hands for taking us to our beloved Isaac ?

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