

Exegetical Notes, Exodus 4:24-26
“A Bridegroom of Blood”

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Exodus 4:24-26

Verse 24

At the lodging place on the way, YHWH met Moses and was about to kill him.

- As Moses and his family were making their way back to Egypt, they stopped to rest for the night at a spot where people stopped to rest. At that spot, God came to talk with Moses again. The word translated “met” simply implies a normal meeting.
- The agenda of the meeting is not revealed in the text. However, it can be assumed from the context that the subject was the circumcision of Gershom, Moses’ son. The covenant or agreement that God had reached with Abraham required the Hebrews to circumcise their children as a sign that they had accepted God’s offer. See Genesis 17:9-14. Apparently, in Gershom’s case, Moses had neglected this detail and at this meeting YHWH brought the oversight to Moses’ attention. Apparently, Moses was unwilling to comply with this covenantal obligation. He did not agree to circumcise Gershom.
- As a result of Moses’ refusal to comply with YHWH’s demands, YHWH’s anger burned against Moses for a second time. See Exodus 4:14. YHWH was so angry with Moses that he was about to kill Moses.
- Some scholars argue that this meeting was not between Moses and YHWH but between Moses and some other deity, perhaps Satan, who appeared to be YHWH. They come to this conclusion because of the intensity of God’s reaction to Moses’ disobedience. However, the text uses the divine name to refer to the deity that met with Moses. It does not imply that this was some other deity. The problem is not that YHWH was about to kill Moses. That wording is intended to show us how exasperating Moses could be. He had pushed YHWH to the limit.

This did not surprise YHWH and the whole event is to teach Moses and us not to push God to this point. However, at the end of this meeting, things are still unresolved. God has spoken with Moses, but Moses has not agreed to comply with the request of God.

Verse 25

But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses feet with it. "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me," she said."

- Apparently, the conflict between YHWH and Moses was not entirely private. Zipporah, Moses' wife, had observed the meeting. She understood what YHWH had asked and her husband's refusal to comply. She recognized that Moses had offended YHWH and that he was in danger. So during the night, she circumcised Gershom in compliance with the word of the Lord. She then took Gershom's foreskin and put it on Moses' feet, the symbol of his shame. Most scholars agree that this is not the part of Moses' body that she touched with Gershom's foreskin. Figuratively, she exposes the shame of her husband's disobedience to YHWH.
- As she does so, she announces that Moses is a "Bridegroom of Blood" to her. This troubling and obscure phrase has significance for Christians who remember that Christ is the "bridegroom of the Church" and his words, "this is the new covenant in my blood shed for the forgiveness of your sins."

Verse 26

So YHWH let him alone. (At that time she said, "bridegroom of blood," referring to circumcision.)

- Zipporah's act of obedience saves Moses, just as the shed blood of Christ saves us.
- The closing remark indicates that Zipporah's understanding of what she said to Moses was limited. However, it also implies that the remark carried meaning beyond what she understood.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *A Bridegroom of Blood*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)