

Trumpets, Blood, Cloud, and Fire



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Exod. 12:1–29; Numbers 9; 10; Matt. 26:36–43; Luke 22:15, 19, 20; 1 Cor. 15:52.*

Memory Text: “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (*1 Corinthians 5:7*).

At the last Passover that Jesus ate with His disciples, He instituted the Lord's Supper. Taking some of the same elements of the Passover meal, Jesus said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And of the cup, He said, “This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (*Matt. 26:26–29*). And Paul wrote: “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come” (*1 Cor. 11:26*).

The Lord's Supper is the Christian Passover, the New Testament parallel to Israel's deliverance from Egypt. This week we'll look at Israel's first anniversary of that deliverance. We'll look also at the Lord's guiding presence among the camp of the Israelites, as well as the silver trumpets that were blown at certain times, and a few other accounts that reveal the situation of God's ancient people in their unique circumstances.

As always, we'll look for lessons that we can take for ourselves as we face, in our time and context, some of the same kinds of trials and temptations that they did, no matter how radically different the circumstances.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 24.*

In Remembrance of Me

Read Numbers 9:1–5 and Exodus 12:1–29. What spiritual truths can we take away from these accounts for ourselves? As you read, think, for example, about such things as obedience, grace, redemption, faith, and judgment.

This was the first anniversary of the amazing night in Egypt when the Lord’s angel slew the firstborn of the Egyptians but “passed over” (hence the name Passover) the dwellings of Israel marked by the blood of the sacrificial lamb. Now, in what was to be an annual ritual, they were to remember the night of their special deliverance from Egypt and the salvation that God had wrought in their behalf.

How are the followers of Jesus to commemorate the Passover today? *Luke 22:15, 19, 20.* What is this service to remind us of?

“Christ was standing at the point of transition between two economies and their two great festivals. He, the spotless Lamb of God, was about to present Himself as a sin offering, that He would thus bring to an end the system of types and ceremonies that for four thousand years had pointed to His death. As He ate the Passover with His disciples, He instituted in its place the service that was to be the memorial of His great sacrifice. The national festival of the Jews was to pass away forever. The service which Christ established was to be observed by His followers in all lands and through all ages. . . .

“The ordinance of the Lord’s Supper was given to commemorate the great deliverance wrought out as the result of the death of Christ. . . . It is the means by which His great work for us is to be kept fresh in our minds.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 652, 653.

The Guiding Presence

One of the most wonderful assurances that Israel had in the wilderness was the visible sign of God’s presence, as manifested in the most remarkable way: the cloud by day and the fire by night.

Think about it. Composed of perhaps two million people living in a barren and dangerous wilderness, the camp must have spread out for many miles in all directions. With no means of instant and direct communication (no radio, telephone, Internet), there had to be some way of letting them know when and where they were to go.

Read Numbers 9:15–23. How did this manifestation of God’s presence reveal to them God’s will, at least in terms of their movement?

The Lord’s leading of Israel by means of the visible cloud was not always through easily traveled highways. Jeremiah records that He led them “through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt” (*Jer. 2:6*).

But there’s a deeper issue here than just where and when to go. The existence of the cloud by day and the fire by night was also a very powerful reminder to them of God’s abiding presence. According to Numbers 9:16, “So it was alway: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.” No matter where they were, what trials they would face, what foes they would meet, there—hovering in the sky—was a visible marker of God’s presence among them.

It must have been nice to have had that. This cloud and fire certainly would have been more than enough to keep them faithful, trusting, and obedient to God, right?

When seeking to make a decision about where to go, how often have you wished you had a cloud by day and a fire by night to guide you? What promises, though, can you find in the Bible of God’s willingness to lead us, and to be present among us even today? What choices can you make that will enable you to be more open to God’s leading and more aware of His presence?

Silver Signals

Ancient Israel had two kinds of horns: the common ram's horn (the shofar), and the two silver metal horns that essentially belonged to the sanctuary and were blown only by the priests (*Num. 10:8*). The latter were made of hammered work, each wrought from one piece of metal. The silver horn was like a long tube, flared on one end.

Read Numbers 10:1–10. What was the purpose of the blowing of these trumpets? What kind of spiritual lessons can be drawn from the use of these trumpets?

The blowing of these silver trumpets carried a meaning in addition to their more practical applications. Their blowing was to be considered an “ordinance.” In war it assured them that they would “be remembered before the Lord your God,” and they would be saved from their enemies (*vs. 9*). Thus, the sounding of these horns served as “a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God” (*vs. 10*).

How interesting, then, that even with all the manifestations of God's leading, guiding, and presence, the Lord used these trumpets, too, in order to remind Israel of His presence and care. Both by sight (the cloud and the fire) and by sound (the trumpets) they were given special reminders of God's guidance and presence among them.

Today, we don't have the cloud, the fire, or the silver trumpets to remind us of God's guidance and presence. We do, though, have the New Testament revelation of what God has done for us through Jesus, which gives us an assurance of His love and care that ancient Israel couldn't have appreciated fully. They knew, only in types and shadows, what we now have in reality, and that is the knowledge of God's love as revealed through the Cross.

What would you rather have: a silver trumpet bellowing in your ears or the knowledge of the love, the character, and care of the One who, “being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”? *Phil. 2:6–8*.

What one trumpet sound do you really want to hear, and why?
1 Cor. 15:52.

“Be to Us Eyes”

After Sarah’s death, Abraham remarried. Keturah bore him a number of sons, one named Midian (*Gen. 25:1–6*). Jethro (also named Reuel [*Exod. 2:18*], friend of God) became Moses’ father-in-law when Moses married his daughter, Zipporah. Jethro is designated “the priest of Midian” (*Exod. 18:1*) and worshiped the true God (*vs. 12*). Other descendants of Midian turned away from the faith of Abraham to pagan gods; these were often enemies of Israel.

What request did Moses make of Hobab, Jethro’s son? What was his response? *Num. 10:29–32*.

Moses didn’t consult God before he tried to persuade Hobab to accompany Israel. Was not the presence of God in the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night more than sufficient to guide the migrating nation through the wilderness? Here we see Moses’ humanity waffling before the challenge that faced him, and failing to remember that the God who opened the Red Sea also could open a path through the deserts and provide both food and water.

Read Matthew 26:36–43. What does this tell us about Jesus in His humanity?

Even our Savior felt at times the need for human sympathy and support. While He loved all the disciples, He was especially close to Peter, James, and John. In Gethsemane He solicited their prayers. On the mount of transfiguration the same trio slept instead of praying. But Heaven sent Moses and Elijah to encourage Christ to go forward with His atoning death (*Luke 9:28–31*). “Now heaven had sent its messengers to Jesus; not angels, but men who had endured suffering and sorrow, and who could sympathize with the Saviour in the trial of His earthly life. Moses and Elijah had been collaborators with Christ. They had shared His longing for the salvation of men. . . . The hope of the world, the salvation of every human being, was the burden of their interview.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 422, 425.

Though we are to lean on the Lord, how often we find human sympathy so comforting and helpful. Go over times when you especially have been blessed by someone who gave you comfort and sympathy in time of need. What made it so helpful? How might you now provide comfort and encouragement to someone in need?

Heading Home?

Read the account in Numbers 10:11–36 of the Israelites’ first journey as God’s organized, covenant people. What’s the one thing that stands out regarding the manner in which they moved? Why would that be so important?

According to Moses, it was only an 11-day journey from Mount Sinai (Horeb) to Kadesh-Barnea, a city or area near to what eventually would become the southern border of Judah.

Note the order. Three tribal armies followed the cloud and the ark. Then the Levites with their wagons carried the various parts of the portable sanctuary. Three more tribal armies followed. Then came the Kohathites, bearing the sanctuary furnishings. Six armies followed, protecting the rear from attack. Everything was done in a very orderly manner. Considering what was going on, if it were done haphazardly at all, it would have been an incredible disaster just waiting to happen.

The quickest way to Canaan from Egypt lay through the coastal area along “the way of the land of the Philistines.” But God knew Israel was not ready for war (*Exod. 13:17*). Consequently, when the pillar of cloud signaled the tribal march, it led the nation east and north into the wilderness of Paran (*Num. 10:11, 12*), a journey of three days (*vs. 33*).

“As they advanced, the way became more difficult. Their route lay through stony ravine and barren waste. All around them was the great wilderness. . . . The rocky gorges, far and near, were thronged with men, women, and children, with beasts and wagons, and long lines of flocks and herds. Their progress was necessarily slow and toilsome; and the multitudes, after their long encampment, were not prepared to endure the perils and discomforts of the way.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 377.

Read Numbers 10:35, 36. How could you apply the principles there today in your struggles and battles in the faith? Also, ask yourself this question: why didn’t God, using His awesome power, just automatically make the way clear and easy for them? Couldn’t He just have done that? If so, why didn’t He just do it for them instead of putting them through such a severe trial? How can your answer here, perhaps, help you understand why He simply doesn’t make your paths and journey simple and obstacle-free? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.

Further Study: We face decisions every day—some more serious than others. Contemplate the following promises regarding God’s guidance: *Ps. 31:3; 32:8; 48:14; 78:52; Isa. 58:10, 11.*

“If you have given yourself to God, to do His work, you have no need to be anxious for tomorrow. He whose servant you are, knows the end from the beginning. The events of tomorrow, which are hidden from your view, are open to the eyes of Him who is omnipotent.

“When we take into our hands the management of things with which we have to do, and depend upon our own wisdom for success, we are taking a burden which God has not given us, and are trying to bear it without His aid. We are taking upon ourselves the responsibility that belongs to God, and thus are really putting ourselves in His place. . . . But when we really believe that God loves us and means to do us good we shall cease to worry about the future. We shall trust God as a child trusts a loving parent. Then our troubles and torments will disappear, for our will is swallowed up in the will of God.”
—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 100, 101.

Discussion Questions:

- ① As a class, share your answers to Thursday’s final question. Why do we face the trials we face when God could, it would seem, take all the obstacles away? How does our understanding of the great controversy help us, at least partially, answer this question? See *Job 1 and 2*.
- ② Discuss more this question of human support. What are other examples you can find in the Bible of how human support was so crucial and helpful to some of God’s faithful people? In what ways does God minister to the needs of people through human support? How well does your local church do in this area?
- ③ When we partake of the Lord’s Supper, how can we better appreciate exactly what it means? Go over in your mind the great truth of salvation by faith alone and how through faith in Jesus’ death for us we have the promise of eternal life.

Summary: Before leaving their year-long encampment at Sinai, Israel celebrated their first Passover anniversary in freedom. God would not have them forget their marvelous redemption from Egyptian slavery. On their tribal march of three days, the nation was led by God in the pillar of cloud and fire. The march took place in an orderly manner at the signals of the silver trumpets and the priests bearing the ark in the forefront. The cloud led eastward and northward in the wilderness of Paran. In the same way, God’s leading sometimes seems hard to us. But the key is to trust Him, our all-wise Father.

Making Up for Lost Time

by OSVALDO FERREIRA DE SOUSA

I was born into an Angolan family who claimed to be Christian. But no one ever told me what the Bible says or what it means to follow God.

During Angola's long civil war, I was drafted into the military. I married a wonderful woman. But shortly after our marriage, she began attending the Adventist church. Although she didn't join the church, she attended faithfully and often talked to me about the pastor's messages and invited me to worship with her. But I rudely refused. I troubled her over religion and told her that I wasn't interested in her church—or any church. Even special events that she invited me to attend received a cold shoulder.

Then in 2002 she invited me to attend a large camp meeting-like conference that the church was sponsoring. She said that she wanted to be baptized at this meeting. I didn't object to her being baptized, and I agreed to go with her. I had no idea that God had a special appointment with me at that conference.

While witnessing my wife's baptism, God spoke to me, inviting me—the doubter, the antagonist—to give Him a chance and to attend church with my wife. I accepted God's invitation, and the following week I surprised my wife by going to church with her. And when I continued to attend worship services with her, she asked the pastor to put my name on the list of potential baptismal candidates. In March of 2007, I was baptized.

I am no longer the stubborn husband I once was. I know now that the Holy Spirit used my wife's persistent faith to touch my heart. I thank God—and my wife—for being patient with me all those years when I refused to listen to the Spirit's urging.

Today I love to share God's love with anyone who will listen. I tell them how wonderful it is to surrender their lives to Jesus. Many refuse to listen, even as I refused. But I am not discouraged. God has blessed my efforts, and two of my colleagues from work now study the Bible with me.

I want everyone in my city to know this wonderful Jesus and His message for these last days of history. I wasted a lot of time refusing to listen, but I want to make the most of the time I have left and share God's love. This work cannot stop until Jesus comes.

Thank you for your support of mission through your prayers and offerings. You helped bring me to Jesus.

OSVALDO FERREIRA DE SOUSA *shares his faith in Lubango, Angola.*