

Schedule of Meeting Times:

WKAC 1080 AM Sunday 7:30 AM

Speaker, Robert Emerson

Study Sunday 10:00 AM

Worship Sunday 11:00 AM

Worship Sunday 5:00 PM

Singing every 2nd Sunday evening

Study Wednesday 7:00 PM

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Come study
with us!



Servants during February:

Songleader: Stanley (3); Larry (10); David (17), Chandler (24), Dwight (3/3),

Reading: Stanley

Announcements: Marty

Communion: Mike, Lakin, Robert, Chandler

Wednesday Lesson: Larry (6), Stanley (13), Kris (20), Mike (27)

Lawn Mowing (week starting):

On winter vacation...

Singing: TBD (24)

Area Meetings: Eastside (Singing 13-17); Market Street (Singing 22)

Hays Mill church of Christ

21705 Hays Mill Road

Elkmont, AL 35620

The Bible . Examiner

"Examine everything carefully..." – 1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB

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SACKCLOTH AND ASHES

By Kris Vilander

Every one of us has grieved at the loss of a loved one; it is a natural human emotion that crosses every boundary—national, ethnic, gender, religion... even the borders of time. In the same way that all of every sort die, all of every sort experience similar emotions due to death. How we deal with that emotion can be very different, however; and some of those expressions are cultural.

The earliest Biblical record of mourning is of Abraham, following his wife Sarah's death, Gen 23:2; not so many years afterward, we find Jacob mourning for Joseph, when he was shown his son's coat covered with blood, Gen 37:34,35. While not much is said about how Abraham expressed his grief, Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth (a rough garment made of goat hair, uncomfortable to wear), and "mourned for his son many days."

The Bible records that the ancients would do this not only while grieving for the dead, but at other

times of disaster or tragedy: Job tore his robe, shaved his head, and sat in ashes, having lost everything including his health, Job 1:20; 2:8; Tamar tore her garment and put ashes on her head because she had been raped and left desolate, 2 Sam 13:19; David fasted, neglected personal hygiene, and lay on the ground for a week, pleading with God because his child lay dying, 2 Sam 12:15-20; and all the Jews left in Persia behaved similarly when the plot to destroy them became known, Esth 4:1-3.

Actually, this kind of expression of grief and dismay was found in other nations during ancient time as well; the Moabites would shave their head and beard, and wear sackcloth, Isa 15:3, as would those of the city of Tarshish, Ezek 27:31; the Amorites would wear sackcloth, Jer 49:3; in fact, in response to a call to repentance, the Ninevites called for a fast and the wearing of sackcloth for both themselves and their livestock, Jonah 3:5-8.


Yet, while the scripture records many instances of God's people behaving in such a way, the Old Covenant Law required none of it—except on the Day of Atonement, when they were to “humble their souls” because of their sin: in other words, they would fast, Lev 16:29-31; 23:27. As to the tearing of garments, sitting in or putting ashes on one's head, and neglecting one's appearance—while not required, they became evidence of repentance (sorrow for sin) and seeking God, Dan 9:3; Ezra 8:21.

As with other practices that were common among the people of the time, God regulated this behavior under the Old Covenant, including forbidding things that would have been related to idolatrous worship. God's people were not to harm their bodies or shave their hair as a result of grieving, Lev 19:28; Deut 14:1; although it appears that they resumed the customs of the nations round about them in later times, Jer 16:6; 41:5.

Although this behavior didn't originate with God, He did at times reference it when calling his people to repentance; but it wasn't the act itself that was important to him—it was the heart behind it. God spoke to Israel, Joel 2:12,13 “‘Yet even now,’ declares the LORD, ‘Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning; (13) And rend your heart and not your garments.’ Now return

to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil.” John the Baptizer warned, “...bear fruit in keeping with repentance,” Mt 3:8. True repentance will show in your behavior, but it doesn't mean simply tearing the neck of your shirt; it means turning away from sin, and toward God. That is what God has always wanted from man: clean hands, and a pure heart, Psa 24:3,4; Jas 4:8.

The things the ancient Hebrews did when they grieved are not typically a part of our culture (though perhaps we should consider fasting on appropriate occasions, Acts 13:2; Mt 6:16). They showed their grief in very different ways than we would, just as we differ from men in other nations today—yet, we have all grieved at the loss of a loved one.

Even so, there is a difference in grief between a child of God, and someone that doesn't know Him: 1 Thess 4:13, “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.” Christians look forward to a resurrection to Eternal Life; and while we grieve for the temporary loss of those we love, we have confidence that we will see the faithful again, in far better circumstances, without fear of another parting, 1 Thess 4:17. 

A Bridegroom... of Blood

By Kris Vilander

An interesting passage is found in Ex 4:24-26: “Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the LORD met [Moses] and sought to put him to death. (25) Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet, and she said, ‘You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me.’ (26) So He let him alone. At that time she said, ‘You are a bridegroom of blood’—because of the circumcision.


Centuries before, Abraham had been commanded to circumcise all his male descendants (Gen 17:10,14; 21:4); anyone not circumcised was considered to have broken the covenant, and was to be cut off from his people. This passage opens saying that God sought to put Moses to death; while the Israelites in Egypt were circumcised (Josh 5:5), one of the two sons born to him in Midian (Ex 4:20; 2:22; 18:4) was not.

At this point, we have to make some assumptions... In the midst of crisis, his wife circumcised their son with a flint knife (possibly a traditional material, rather than metal,

Josh 5:2,3), perhaps because Moses was physically unable (God sought to kill him!). By her actions, Zipporah bought his life by the blood of her son, so she called him a bridegroom (husband) of blood. But apparently she wasn't happy about being forced to circumcise her son (she cast the foreskin at his feet), which may be why Moses hadn't done so to start with (if he preferred to please his wife, 1 Cor 7:33)... and part of why God was so displeased with him.

It is likely at this point that Zipporah and their two sons are returned to Midian; but they would reunite with Moses at Mount Sinai some months later, Ex 18:2.

At least two lessons may be gained here: first, God means what He says; and second, He must always take precedence in our lives—even over those relationships closest on earth to us.

Surely these lessons that would have helped to make Moses “faithful in all his house as a servant,” Heb 3:5, can help us as well. 

Remember in Prayer

This has been a week of relative quiet; but, as always, please continue to pray for those that are unable to

meet with us: Lois Adams, Ruth Black, Carolyn Dennis, Tim and Dot Hice, Polly McNatt, and Hazel Teeples. 