

Ministry of Grace Church

Exodus 35 to Numbers 10

We've been going through the book of Exodus learning about how *Yahweh* brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. Last time, we looked at chapter 34 where we saw Moses make his sixth and final ascent up Mt. Sinai where he was treated with the most amazing description of who *Yahweh* is. He told Moses that He is "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." After this amazing encounter with Yahweh, Moses returned to the camp of the Israelites where he had made a tent of meeting so that he could meet with Yahweh on a regular basis.

At this point, the Bible focuses on the building of the Tabernacle, its furnishings, and the regulations that relate to the Levitical priests. We will not be going into detail regarding this section. The following is a brief summary of Exodus, Leviticus, and the first part of Deuteronomy.

Exodus 35

This chapter describes how the children of Israel freely gave for the building of the Tabernacle: gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats' hair; ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate.

Exodus 36

Moses realized that the people gave more than was needed to build the Tabernacle, so he told the people to stop giving. Bezalel and Aholiab were gifted by God to produce the decorations for the Tabernacle. The remainder of the chapter is a description of the building of the curtains, walls, and tent of the Tabernacle.

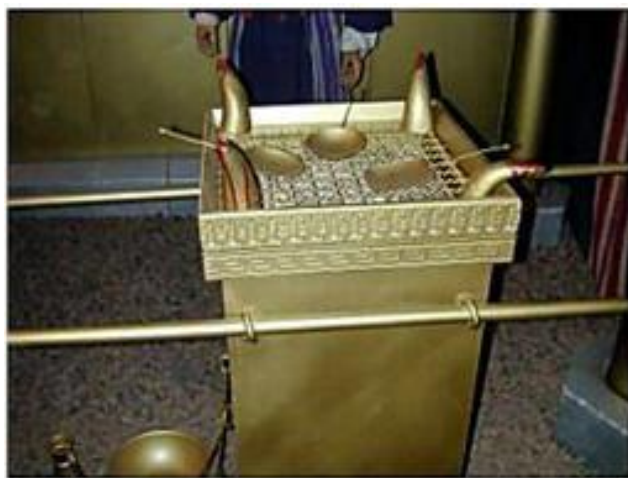


Exodus 37

This chapter contains a description of the ark (box) along with the mercy seat (containing the two cherubim) that covers the ark. There also is a description of the table of showbread Along with its utensils, dishes, cups, bowls, and pitcher. The ark of the testimony along with the mercy seat were the only things in the Most Holy Place.



Also described in this chapter are the lampstand with seven lamps along with its wick trimmers and trays. There also is a description of the incense altar.



The table of showbread, the incense altar, and the lampstand were placed in the Holy Place within the Tabernacle



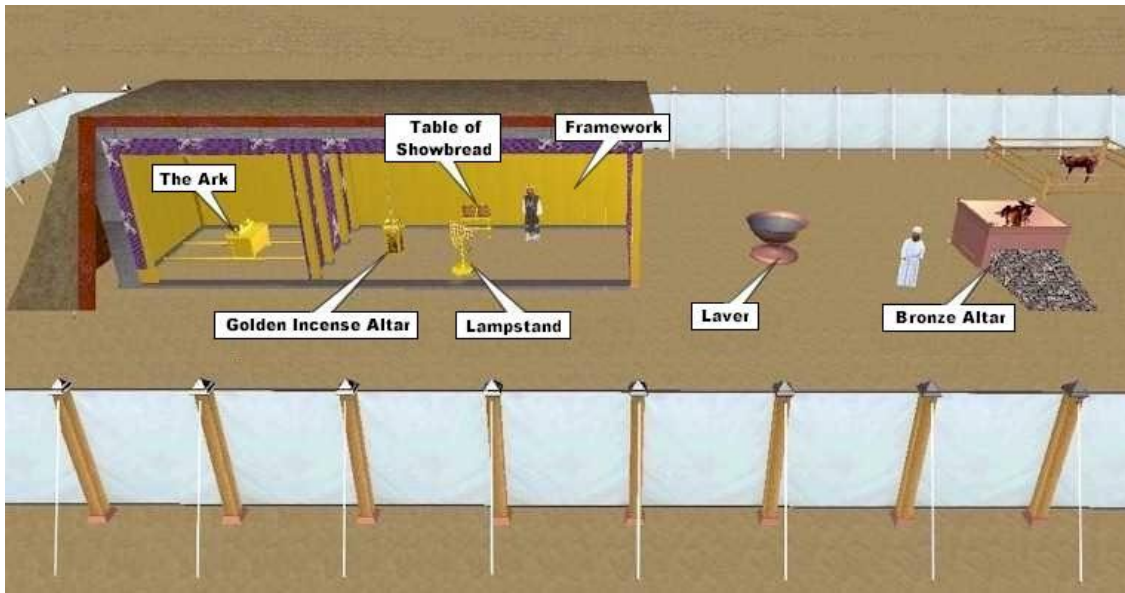
Exodus 38

This chapter contains a description of the altar of burnt offering and its utensils as well as the bronze laver

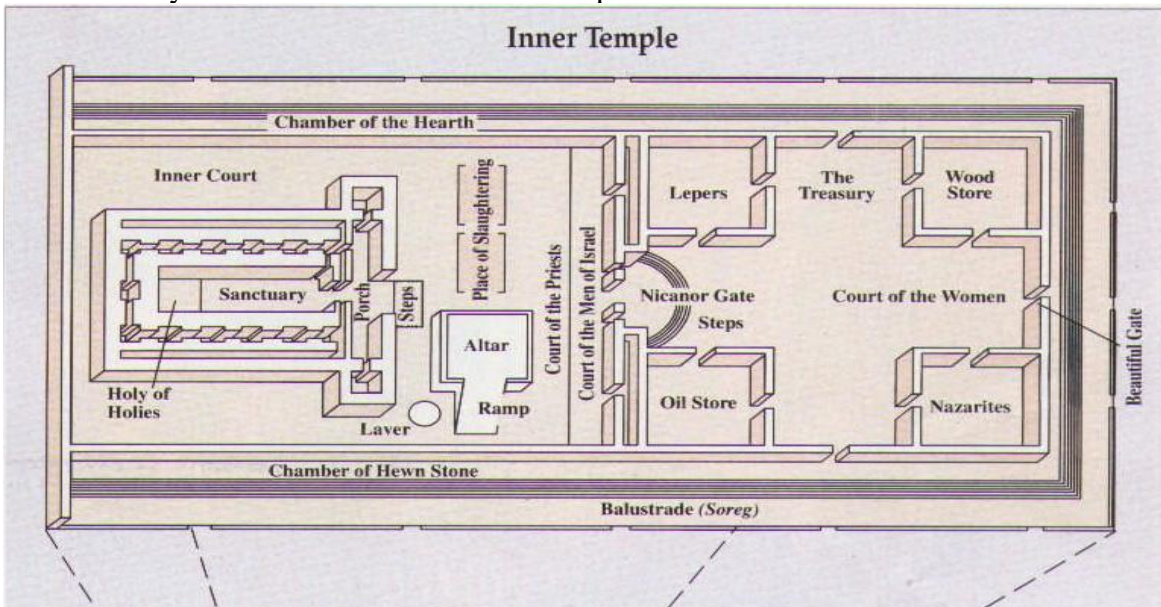


Exodus chapter 38 also includes a description of the hangings of the courtyard around the Tabernacle





Notice the similarity of the Tabernacle with the Temple later built in Jerusalem.



Exodus 39

This chapter contains a description of the priestly garments along with the breastplate and its twelve stones containing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.



Exodus 40

This chapter describes the setting-up of the Tabernacle. This is the conclusion of Exodus, the second book of Moses.

The Book of Leviticus

This entire book of Leviticus is focused on that portion of the Law dealing with the sanctification of Israel through the sacrificial offerings and the associated festivals and holy days. Some of the ancient rabbis referred to this book as “The law of the priests” or “The law-book of sacrificial offerings.” Typically, Jews refer to this book as *Vajikra*, which is the first word in the book. In the Septuagint it is called *leuitikon*, or Leviticus, because it deals with the duties of the Levitical Priesthood (those who are of the family of Jacob’s son Levi). There is very little historical narrative in the book other than the following.

In chapter eight we see an account of the consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests. Chapter nine then describes the offering that Aaron and his sons make (a sin offering, a burnt offering, and peace offerings) for themselves and all the people. At the end of this offering, the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people and fire came down from heaven consuming the burnt offering just made. As a result, the people all shouted a great shout and fell on their faces before the LORD.

Then, in the opening portion of chapter ten we find this account:

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. (**Leviticus 10:1-2**)

The message that *Yahweh* was giving to the people was that the worship of the LORD was to be done the way He prescribed, not in whatever manner the priests decided to do it. In the New Testament we are told how we are to worship our God:

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (**John 4:23-24**)

The other historical narrative in the book of Leviticus is the account of the boy who is stoned to death because of his blasphemy (**Leviticus 24:10-23**).

The Book of Numbers

The English title of this book, like the other four books of Moses, is based on the title given in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament). However, this title is unique among the first five books in that it is not a transliteration of the Greek word, but is a translation of the Greek word. The Greek title is *Arithmoi*, therefore a transliteration might be Arithmus. There is no obvious reason why this title was translated and the others were not. But, had the first two book titles been translated they would probably have been “Beginnings” and “Escape.” The most likely reason for the name Numbers is due to the account this book gives of the two numberings of the people recorded in chapters one and twenty-six. The Jews refer to this book as *Vayedabber*, from the opening word of the book. The Masoretic text gives it the heading, “In the Wilderness.”

This book narrates the history of the children of Israel during their sojourn in the wilderness from the completion of the law-giving at Sinai, which ends with the last chapter of Leviticus, to their gathering in the plains of Moab beside the Jordan River in preparation for entry into the Promised Land.

Numbers 1

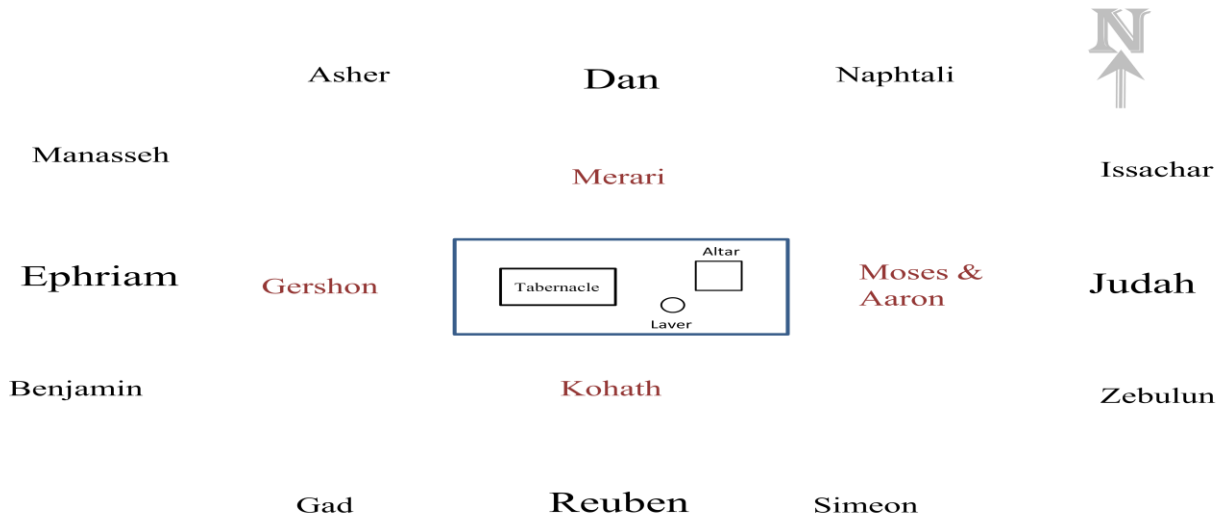
Exactly one month after the setting-up of the Tabernacle, Moses is instructed by *Yahweh* to take a census of the children of Israel by family, all males from 20 years of age and up:

Reuben – 46,500	Simeon – 50,300	Gad – 45,650
Judah – 74,600	Issachar – 54,400	Zebulun – 57,400
Ephraim – 40,500	Manasseh – 32,200	Benjamin – 35,400
Dan – 62,700	Asher – 41,500	Naphtali – 53,400
TOTAL – 603,550		

Notice that this does not include the sons of Levi. This was to be the priestly tribe and they were not to go out to war so they were not numbered. Instead, they were to care for the Tabernacle and its furnishings.

Numbers 2

In this chapter is the layout of the encampment of the Israelites as they wandered through the wilderness. It was laid-out thus:



Numbers 3

The Levites were set-aside for the service of the Tabernacle and they were numbered to include all males from a month old and up.

- Gershon – 7,500 (in charge of the Tabernacle, its covering, & the court hangings)
- Kohath – 8,600 (in charge of the Ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, & utensils)
- Merari – 6,200 (in charge of the boards of the Tabernacle, its pillars, bars and sockets, and the pillars of the court)

TOTAL – 22,300

These Levites were to be set-aside for God in replacement of the first born of Israel who had been saved when the LORD passed over the Israelites. Then Moses was commanded to number all the first born males among all Israel from a month old and up and he counted 22,273.

Numbers 4

When the Israelites break camp, Aaron and his sons are to go in and cover all the furnishings of the Sanctuary. Then, after they have been covered, the Kohathites are to carry them. The Gersonites are to

carry the curtains of the Tabernacle and the hangings of the court. The Merarites are to carry the boards & sockets of the Tabernacle and all the poles of the court.

Numbers 5

Moses is commanded to put all lepers outside the camp. God instructs Moses regarding any sin that men commit in unfaithfulness against the LORD. Instruction is given regarding a man who suspects his wife has been unfaithful to him and how the woman is to be tested.

Numbers 6

The vow of a nazirite is described with all its ceremony.

Numbers 7

Moses anointed and consecrated all the furnishings of the Tabernacle. The twelve leaders of the twelve tribes brought an offering of six covered carts and twelve oxen which were to be used by the Gershonites and Merarites to carry the things of the Tabernacle. The Kohathites were to carry the items of the sanctuary on their shoulders. Then the leaders offered dedication offerings, one per day for twelve days. At the end of the offerings Moses went into the Tabernacle and God spoke to him from the mercy seat from between the cherubim.

Numbers 8

Moses is given instruction for Aaron for the setting-up of the lampstand. God instructs Moses on the purification of the Levites. The Levites are consecrated and allowed to do the work of the sanctuary from the ages of twenty-five to fifty.

Numbers 9

On the first month of the second year God instructed Moses to remind the people to keep the Passover at its appointed time. The Israelites kept the Passover. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night remained over the Tabernacle until *Yahweh* was ready for the Israelites to move on.

Numbers 10

The chapter starts out with a description of the making and use of the two silver trumpets. This is followed by the departure of the Israelites from Mt. Sinai.

Numbers 10:11, 12

In the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, the cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the testimony, and the people of Israel set out by stages from the wilderness of Sinai. And the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Paran. (Numbers 10:11-12)

This description of the journey from Mt. Sinai to the wilderness of Paran is a general overview. We know from Numbers 11:35 that they camped at Kibroth Hattaavah and then moved to Hazeroth. And, from Numbers 12:16 we know that the Israelites traveled from Hazeroth to the Wilderness of Paran.

Numbers 10:13-28

A description is given of the order of the march for the twelve tribes, with the Kohathites marching in the middle carrying the holy things.

Numbers 10:29-36

And Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will do good to

you, for the LORD has promised good to Israel.” But he said to him, “I will not go. I will depart to my own land and to my kindred.” And he said, “Please do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us. And if you do go with us, whatever good the LORD will do to us, the same will we do to you.” So they set out from the mount of the LORD three days' journey. And the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them. And the cloud of the LORD was over them by day, whenever they set out from the camp. And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, “Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you.” And when it rested, he said, “Return, O LORD, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel.”

We have previously studied the persons of Reuel and Jethro. We first met Reuel in [Exodus 2:16-21](#) when he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses as his wife. In other words, Reuel is definitely Moses father-in-law. We encountered Jethro in Exodus chapter 18 when he brought Moses wife and two sons to Moses. At the end of chapter 18 we saw that Moses allowed him to depart to his own land. During the studies of both chapters we noted that the term father-in-law is translated from a Hebrew word that simply means “related through the wife” and it could be interpreted “brother-in-law” just as easily as “father-in-law.” So, we don’t really know if Jethro is simply another name for Reuel or if he is Moses’ brother-in-law, the son of Reuel. What we do know, from [Numbers 10:29](#), is that Hobab is the son of Reuel, but the Hebrew word for “son” is often used to designate “descendent.” So, Hobab could be either the son of Reuel, or the grandson of Reuel. Therefore, it is possible that Reuel is the father, Jethro is his son, and Hobab is his grandson. It is also possible that Jethro and Hobab are one and the same person and that he went home in Exodus 18, then later returned to the camp. Or, perhaps, Jethro and Hobab are brothers, both sons of Reuel. We really don’t know for sure.

What is certain is that Moses wanted Hobab to remain with the Israelites. His reason for wanting him to remain is because Hobab knew this wilderness and he knew “how to camp in the wilderness.” Moses is not asking him to show the Israelites where to camp, because *Yahweh* will do this via the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Moses promises Hobab that as *Yahweh* blesses the Israelites, so the Israelites will bless Hobab and his descendents. After Hobab indicated that he would not go with the Israelites but return to his relatives, Moses pleaded with him to go with them. Apparently, Hobab decided to go with them because it is mentioned later in the book of Judges that the Kenites (descendants of Moses’ in-law) were living among the Israelites:

And the descendants of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up with the people of Judah from the city of palms into the wilderness of Judah, which lies in the Negeb near Arad, and they went and settled with the people. ([Judges 1:16](#))

Thus, the Israelites departed from Mt. Sinai approximately eleven months after they arrived there (see Timeline of The Exodus from Egypt.)

So What?

We noted earlier in this study that the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai represents a transition point in the travels of the Israelites. From the rise of the Pharaoh “who knew not Joseph” to the proclaiming of the Ten Commandments and the sealing of the covenant, we see the activities of *Yahweh* and His people as they make their exodus **from** Egypt. From this point on, now that the Law of Moses has been delivered, we will see the activities of *Yahweh* and His people as they journey **to** the Promised Land.

However, much more subtle here is the transition between God’s dealings with the Israelites in a manner of grace, up till the giving of the Law, to the gradual decline into the imprisoning abyss of legalism on the part of the Israelites. But why do you suppose God would show us this marvelous imagery of salvation from the bondage of sin and then portray the rescued Israelites as rebellious, spoiled children gradually enslaved by the bondage of legalism? Could it be that we all have this

tendency? In the past weeks of this study, we have seen the Israelites witnessing numerous miracles of *Yahweh* (the Egyptian plagues, the parting of the sea, water from the rock, the daily manna for food, and the magnificent display of God's presence on Mt. Sinai). We will see in the coming weeks that these same people will continue to complain, they will refuse to follow Moses' instructions to go up into the land and conquer it. And when chastened by God for refusing to obey they will stubbornly go up into the land without God's blessing, suffering defeat at the hands of the inhabitants of the land. We will also see Korah, one of the Levites, challenge Moses' leadership and be judged by God for it.

As we have said before, the way that God deals with the Israelites, from their salvation in Egypt all the way to their entrance into the Promised Land, is a picture of the Christian experience. Our salvation journey began when we realized that we were lost and without hope on our own. It was when we surrendered to God, believing that the sacrificial death of His Son paid the debt that we couldn't pay, that God extended His grace to us and passed-over our own sentence of death. At that moment He began leading us out of the world of sin and into the wilderness. As we started our journey we began to recognize God's working in our lives. Through faith we witnessed how much He had already done and how much more He has promised to do for us, both in this life and in the Eternal Promised Land. As young Christians we began to learn about the Bible and we got to know our God better because of what's recorded in its pages. We learned to draw closer to our Heavenly Father and gained knowledge about how he wants us to live.

At some point along the way we begin to understand the "rules" of Christianity. The more we learn about the "rules" the more we take control of our own lives. But, the more we take control of our lives, the more we misunderstand God's dealing with us. For instance, instead of being humbled by God's chastening hand, we complain because things aren't going the way we want them to. The problem with learning the "rules" of our Christian walk is that we begin to rely on the rules to keep us happy and we forget to humble ourselves before God, seeking His direction for our lives. The more we rely on the "rules" the more we use them to accomplish our goals and the less we seek the glory of Almighty God.

What we will find as we continue through our study of the Exodus from Egypt and entrance into the Promised Land, is that all but two of those Israelites who beheld God's glory on the mountain top and heard the voice of God declaring the Ten Commandments died before entering the Promised Land. They all heard the Law and they all worshipped God through their sacrifices at the Tabernacle. They all partook of the manna every day and they all beheld the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They learned to perform all the rituals of the faith, yet all but two of them died in the wilderness.

Does that mean that the Law is bad? Does it mean that the Israelites were wrong to obey the requirements of the sacrificial offerings? No! There's nothing wrong with the Law. In fact, Paul teaches us in Romans that the Law is good:

So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. (Romans 7:12)

So, what is the difference between what 600,000 Jews did (those who died in the wilderness) and what Joshua and Caleb did? We'll learn in a few weeks that Joshua and Caleb believed God and were willing to follow His leading. It had nothing to do with the keeping of the Law. It had nothing to do with the ritual and the ceremony and the festivals. They all performed those. It had everything to do with faith. Not saving faith! That happened back in Egypt when they killed the Passover Lamb and sprinkled its blood on the door posts. The thing that allowed Joshua and Caleb to gain God's favor was their walking faith. They never allowed themselves to rely on the ritual and the "rules" to get them through. They listened to God and they were willing to follow His direction even in the face of giants and insurmountable odds.

Where is your wilderness walk today? Have you been faithfully learning the “rules?” Do you know them well enough that you rely on them? Do you go to church every week? Do you give of your time and your money to further the cause of Christ? Do you read your Bible regularly and do you pray without ceasing? If you do, good for you!

But - do you have peace? I didn't say, “Are you comfortable?” I said, do you have peace? Caleb and Joshua had peace. Oh sure, they had challenges. They had to face giants. They had to stand up against peer pressure and make it known that they believed God when no one else did. But they knew what Paul taught the Colossians:

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ... And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:15, 17)

Throughout the centuries, between the giving of the Law and the arrival of the Messiah, the Jewish people had practiced all the rules. They had performed all the correct rituals; they had observed all the holy days in the prescribed manner. But they had forgotten that their relationship with God was based on faith, not on the “rules.” They became so enslaved to church rules that they couldn't recognize the Messiah, for whom they had been waiting, when He fulfilled the prophecy and entered the city riding on a donkey. They accused the Messiah of claiming to be God. Then they tortured Him on the cross for being who He claimed to be. They had become so dependent on the “rules” that they couldn't see God standing right in front of them.

Where is your wilderness walk taking you today? Do you feel lost? Do you thirst for the peace that only God can give? It's not too late, my friend. You can cast yourself at His feet right now and confess your selfish, sinful ways. Humble yourself before Him and in His time, He will lift you up. Toss all of your worry, your anxieties, your cares, on Him because He is taking care of you. Recommit yourself to listening to His still, small voice instead of the deafening noise of the world system. Turn control back to the One who knows the way and do all you can to bring Him the glory and the praise! Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.