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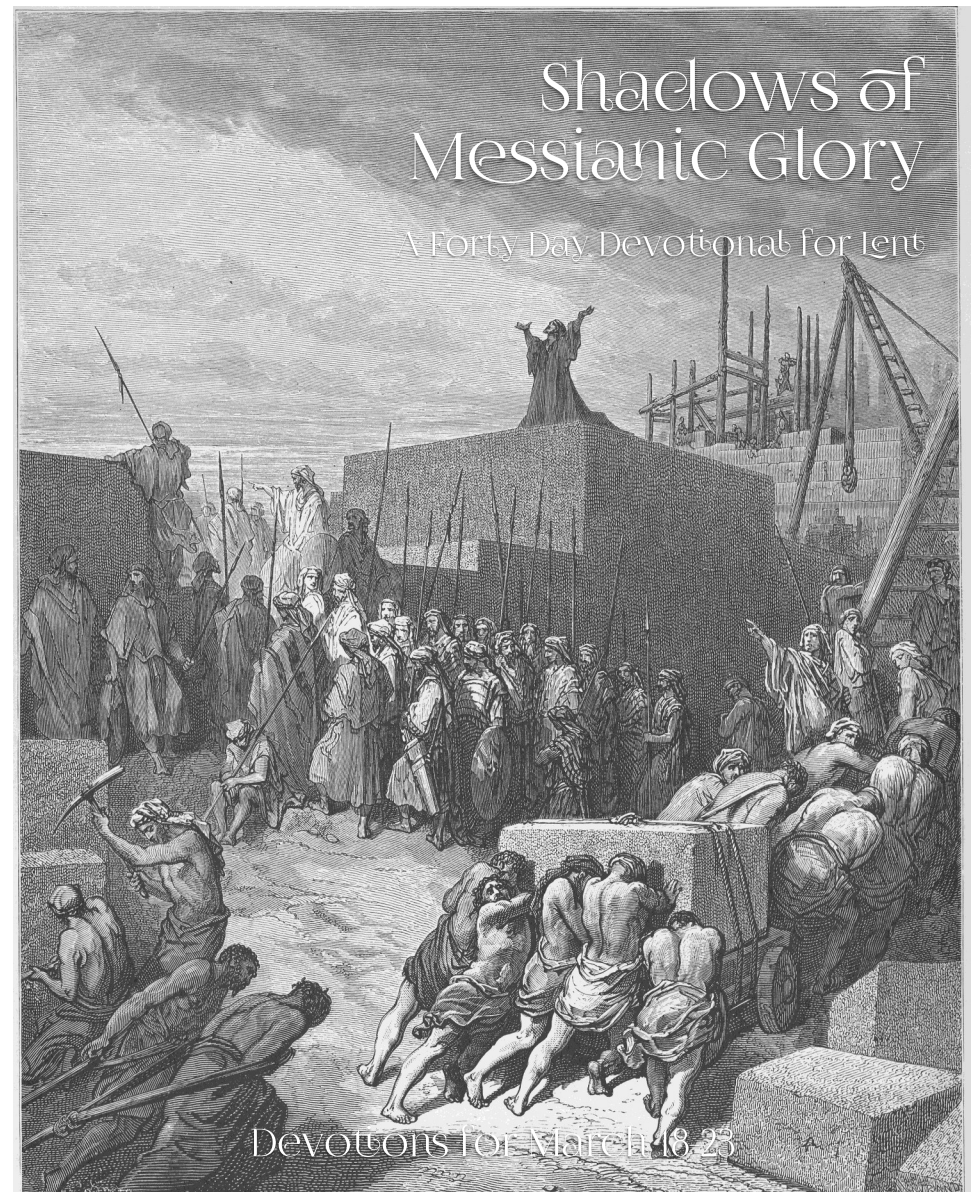
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"The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former."

Haggai 2:9

Isaiah 6:9-10

Haggai 2:6

Leviticus 26:12-13

Exodus 16:33-35

Numbers 6:22-27

Psalms 34:20

Marc h 18

Isaiah 6:9-10

Timeline

700 years before

Christ

Prophet

Isaiah

Fulfillment

Matthew

13:10-15

Acts 28:23-31

Prayer

Father, Son, Holy

Spirit, give us

ears to hear and

hearts to share

Your story.

Amen.

Keep on hearing, but do not
understand; keep on seeing, but
do not perceive.

Aesop's Fables have been told from one generation to another to instill moral values like hard work and honesty. The stories of a tortoise, a hare, and a woodcutter provide morality pictures for our children. Jesus also knew the value of stories, but He was not content with moral goodness. Rather, He revealed the kingdom of God.

"This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled...." (Matt. 13:10-15). If the people could not understand His Messianic work or His teachings on the Kingdom of God, perhaps Jesus' stories could bring clarity.

Jesus told the parable of the sower and the different types of ground (Matt. 13:3-9). The disciples were confused, but He patiently explained the parable and they understood. Sometimes we are like those Jesus and Isaiah warned who were hard of hearing because of their preconceived expectations. We at times are confused about the Kingdom of Heaven. We pollute our soil with mythologies about angels and near death experiences, false teachings, and with "all roads lead to heaven" theology. In 1 Timothy, Paul calls it itching ears when we accumulate teachings we prefer, following our own desires. These things give us ears that do not hear.

The foretold story now retold during Lent is Jesus' walking to the cross, dying in our place and opening to us the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the story of the Father's great love and resurrection. The Father said, "Listen to Him." The disciples did listen and understood. Thanks be to God they retold the story to others.

By Rev. Andy Guagenti

He keeps all his bones; not one of
them is broken.

"Jesus was broken for us." Here's a phrase that you may hear at Lent. But is it really comforting or accurate?

John tells us, "Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that He was already dead, they did not break His legs" (John 19:31-33). Here's something that's worth celebrating! As John goes on to point out, "These things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: 'Not one of His bones will be broken'" (John 19:36). It's such a small detail that if John hadn't mentioned it by holy inspiration, it would be easy to overlook.

In the instructions given by God for the Passover, we hear, "Do not break any of the bones" (Ex. 12:46). This assures us of the great care with which God has carried out our salvation. As Paul notes, "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor. 5:7).

In literature, the word "broken" is often used to describe when someone is defeated. In the Passion, quite the opposite is true. Even while Jesus hung on the cross for you and for me, He cried out in trust, "My God, My God" (Ps. 22:1). And with the work of our salvation complete, Jesus cried out not in despair but with the same firm trust that we can have when our own time comes, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

By Rev. David Tannahill

Marc h 23

Psal m 34:20

Timeline

1000 years before

Christ

Prophet

David

Fulfillment

John 19:31-36

1 Corinthians 5:7

Prayer

Precious Savior,

Passover Lamb,

thank You for ful-

filling every

promised detail of

the sacrifice that

has brought about

my salvation.

Amen.

Marc h 22

Leviticus
26:12-13

Timeline
*written 1400
years before
Christ*

Prophet
Moses

Fulfillment
*John 1:10-14
Revelation 21:3-4
2 Corinthians
6:16*

Prayer

*Dear Lord Jesus,
thank You for be-
ing my friend,
even when my
friendship was
not true. Thank
You for forgiving
me and restoring
me that I might
have eternal life
with You. Help
me to share this
great promise
with others that
they might know
You and be saved.
Amen.*

And I will walk among you and
will be your God, and you shall
be My people.

We have all felt lonely at one time or another, and sometimes that loneliness can be intense. For those who have difficulty making friends, the loss of a true friend to death is devastating. When we have deep friendships with our parents or siblings, losses of people like these are felt for years.

There was a time when Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden of Eden. Think of the deep friendship that a person could develop with the Creator of all. It was ruined by a betrayal, when they disobeyed God's command and didn't trust what He said. If they ate of the fruit they would die. The loss of a friend would be devastating, but losing the Friend who had provided for everything and having no choice but to work by the sweat of one's brow to produce bread—that was scary. What if the ground didn't produce, what if there was drought, what if insects or weeds choked out the crop? They didn't have the assurance that things would be okay no matter what.

But God makes a promise in this passage in Leviticus: "I will walk among you and will be your God...." His promise echoes the Garden of Eden. How comforting was it when Pharaoh was chasing them that God led His people as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, preventing Pharaoh from harming His people?

We have a Friend who has walked the earth and loves us more than any friend ever could. We know this because He died for our salvation. He also rose again that we might have life, and that we might walk with Him forever. His name is Jesus.

By Rev. Chris Truelsen

The people of Israel ate the
manna forty years, till they came
to a habitable land.

What is it? This is what they said when they saw the manna. Even Moses seemed to have a hard time describing exactly what it was. He recorded that it was a fine, flake-like thing scattered like frost on the ground after the sun burned off the dew.

But what was it? It was bread from heaven. The Israelites were in the barren wilderness. Their bellies began to rumble. Their strength was sapped. Their faith began to falter.

God, despite their grumbling, fed them. Day by day this manna would appear, they would gather it, and then it would be gone. It was not the bread they expected. It was not the bread they wanted. But it was the very bread that would sustain them in the wilderness until they reached the Promised Land.

Aaron took some of this bread and put it into a jar which would later be placed in the Ark of the Covenant. Whenever the people gathered to God, they would be reminded that God fed them.

Jesus would one day say that He was the True Bread that had come down out of heaven. And those words ruffled many feathers. How could He claim He was greater than the manna? How could He say He came down from heaven? He was not the bread they expected. He was not the bread they wanted. But He was the bread that if eaten would sustain them in the wilderness and prepare them for the Promised Land.

We too are in the wilderness. We too at times grumble at God. But thanks be to Him, we too are fed by Him. We are fed with the True Bread that came down from heaven. He is given to us in words, water, wafers, and wine. Jesus sustains us day to day and prepares us for life with Him in the Promised Land.

By Rev. Philip Hoppe

Marc h 19

Exodus 16:33-
35

Timeline
*1400 years before
Christ*

Prophet
Moses

Fulfillment
*John 6
1 Corinthians
10:1-5, 16-17*

Prayer

*Gracious Father,
You have prom-
ised that those
who hunger and
thirst for right-
eousness will be
satisfied. Feed us
Jesus, the True
Bread of Life.
Amen.*

Marc h 20

Haggai 2:6-9

Timeline

500 years before
Christ

Prophet
Haggai

Fulfillment

Matthew 2:11
Hebrews 12:25-29

Prayer

*Lord, I love the
habitation of Your
house and the
place where Your
glory dwells. Re-
deem me and be
gracious to me,
today and in the
coming of Your
glorious kingdom.
Amen.*

The latter glory of this house shall
be greater than the former.

The last time you could say Gentile treasures entered the temple of Jerusalem, they did not enter in tribute. In the year 70 AD, the golden eagles of the soldiers of Rome entered the temple, flying in victory. The Romans destroyed all but one wall of that temple. That lonely wall is known today as the Wailing Wall, a relic of the temple that has never been rebuilt.

It was not the first time Gentiles swooped into the temple of stone as predators. Solomon had once filled the temple with gold, tribute from the nations. In those days, "silver was not considered as anything" (1 Kings 10:21). But only one king later, the temple's gold was replaced with bronze after the Egyptian Shishak raided the temple (1 Kings 14:25-27). The temple Solomon built was finally destroyed in 586 BC. God's people were carried off into captivity in Babylon.

When faithful Jews returned to the holy land, Haggai's prophetic ministry centered around encouraging the rebuilding of a new temple. The second temple, finally completed around 70 years after the first was destroyed, never reached the glory of its predecessor.

Jesus' body is the temple which alone can fulfill Haggai's words. Haggai's prophecy begins to find fulfillment in the gifts of the Magi (Matt. 2:11). We Gentile believers continue the fulfillment of this prophecy through our baptism into Jesus (1 Pet. 2:5). We are the body of Christ, bringing in not only gifts of gold, but our time, our talents, and tribute of praise throughout eternity.

In fact, we are the treasure He sought, the souls He bought not with silver or gold but with the priceless treasure of His blood. No wonder this Gospel has shaken the nations. It is a complete reordering of all we value, the dawning of a kingdom that brings in all tribes and peoples.

By Rev. A. Daniel Guagenti

So shall they put my name upon
the people of Israel, and I will
bless them.

You know exactly what the Hebrew phrase "lift up his countenance upon you" means, even if you do not realize it. You fulfill this phrase every time—well, almost every time—you look at your spouse, child, or grandchild. It means to lift up the corners of your mouth. Yes, "smile."

When we look upon the ones we love, we smile. When those we love catch us smiling at them, they smile. Our hearts are glad within us. Think about how you looked at your husband or wife leading up to your wedding and in those first few years. Think about how your dear child's little face lit up when you smiled at him or her.

God tells Moses to have Aaron bless the people by telling them that God looks upon them and smiles with grace. When we gather in God's house, it is not to hear the latest ten things we should do as His people. The main reason is for God to smile upon us in grace, mercy, and peace.

Jesus is the fulfillment of this passage. "You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live" (Ex. 33:20). He is the face of our Father. We see Him and live. He was born to bring the grace and peace of God to us. Just as the angels sang at His birth, He Himself said to the apostles that first Easter, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19).

We have an exceptional blessing in knowing we are loved by God. So many people only see judgment and demands from their false gods. Sometimes even God's people think this about Him. The truth is we are beloved by our Father. Because He sees us and grants us His peace, we will see God and live.

By Rev. Matthew Brackman

Marc h 21

Numbers 6:22
-27

Timeline

1400 years before
Christ

Prophet
Moses

Fulfillment

John 1:18
Matthew 28:18-
20

Prayer

*Smile upon us
with Your grace,
mercy, and peace,
O Lord our God,
King of the Uni-
verse, for You
have redeemed us
and have made us
Your holy people.
Amen.*