

Is Exodus Your Story?

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Date: 26 August 2018

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[0 : 0 0] be in your Bible to Exodus chapter 40. It's page 80, and if you're looking at one of the Pew Bibles, we have come to the end of our series in the book of Exodus. We have made it all the way through.

If you've enjoyed the series, there's some booklets about the tabernacle, and there's a couple copies of a book called Echoes of Exodus on the back table. You can take one for free if you would like to read it to sort of delve further into some of what we've looked at.

But this morning, we are coming to the end. I'm just going to read chapter 40, verses 34 to 38, but we'll be looking at the whole chapter this morning. So, read with me Exodus chapter 40, beginning at verse 34. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys. Let's pray. Lord, as we just sang in that song, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight, because You,

O Lord, are our rock and our Redeemer. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. What's your story? Jonathan Adler, a psychology professor at Olin College, said this, the default mode of human cognition is a narrative mode. In other words, as human beings, we naturally understand our lives and find meaning in the world, not just by listing facts or events or feelings or thoughts, but by telling stories. We tell stories of success when we achieve what we have been striving for, and we tell stories of failure, or perhaps we don't tell those.

We tell stories of redemption when something starts out bad and turns out well. We tell sometimes stories of contamination when things start well and end badly. The stories that we tell reflect who we are, but they also shape who we become. According to one study, people who were recognized as caring and committed to helping future generations often told stories about others who had helped them in the past. People who are narcissists, by contrast, tend to tell stories about themselves or about others who have hurt them over and over and over again. And sometimes we face a crisis because a story that we've been living in for so long doesn't match our present reality anymore. I remember when my wife and I were on our honeymoon about 10 years ago. We went to Canada. We were staying at a wonderful little bed and breakfast and got to know the owners there. And they had opened one of the first all-natural organic food markets back in the 1970s, before Whole Foods even existed, before it was a popular thing to do. And they were at the forefront of raising awareness about the dangers of chemical pesticides, the importance of turning to organic foods. They gathered a loyal following, and then their business partner got cancer and died. And they not only lost a dear friend, but they lost some of the mission that had motivated them. The story that they had lived in and lived out of for many years wasn't quite enough anymore. Or another situation, maybe you've told yourself for years, I'm going to finish high school, I'm going to go to college, graduate, get a job, get married, have kids, and buy a house. And maybe you've done all those things. And then you realize,

[4 : 19] I might have half a lifetime left to go. And I've come to the end of the story that I've been telling myself for years. What's next? Some people call it a midlife crisis. Or maybe you've come here to go to Yale, and you've always been at the top of your class. And now you're looking around at everyone else on campus and thinking, well, there's only half of us who are going to be in the top 50%, and there's only 10% of us who are going to be in the top 10%. Do I really belong here? How will I distinguish myself here? Sometimes people really hit rock bottom because they can't find any story that makes any sense of the world and of their experience, and they feel hopelessly lost.

Maybe you've been there. All kinds of things have happened to you, and you think, I can't find any way to make sense of them. What's your story? And how is the story that you're living in shaping who you are becoming? Over the last eight months, we've looked at the book of Exodus, which is in many ways the foundational story of the Old Testament, and even lays the groundwork for the entire Bible.

The story of Exodus shapes the rest of the Bible. The story of the Bible has in turn shaped entire nations and cultures and families and individuals for generations. So even if you're not a Christian, even if you don't believe any of this, you ought to at least take the time to learn what this story is that has shaped the lives of literally billions of people throughout history and today. Now, we've said several times throughout our series in Exodus that Exodus is a story with three main parts, three main movements. First, God saves. He rescues His people from slavery in Egypt. That's chapters 1 to 18. Second, God instructs. God establishes His covenant and gives them His law at Mount Sinai. That's chapters 19 to 24. And third, God dwells. God comes to live among and with His people in the tabernacle. That's chapters 25 to 40. God saves, God instructs, and God dwells with His people. This morning, I want us to look at two things.

First, I want to look at how the story of Exodus ends. I want to look at chapter 40 in particular. And second, I want to look at what it means. I want to step back a bit and look at the book as a whole and say, what do we take from this book, this story that we've gone through over the last eight months?

So, first, how the story ends. What do we see here in chapter 40? Well, there's two major parts to chapter 40. There's verse 1 to 33, which is about the tabernacle going up. And then there's verses 34 to 38, which we read about the glory of God coming down. So, verses 1 to 15, the Lord commands Moses to set up the tabernacle. This section reads a bit like an instruction manual, starting from what goes inside the ark of the testimony in verse 2, gradually proceeding to the outside, to the court and its gate in verse 8. Then there's instructions about anointing the tabernacle, setting it apart for a holy purpose.

[7 : 40] And then in 9 to 11, then 12 to 15, there's instructions about anointing the priests who would be in charge of the tabernacle and setting them apart. And verse 16 is a summary statement, which says, this Moses did according to all that the Lord commanded him, so he did.

And then verse 17 to 33, we see what that looked like. We see Moses carrying out God's commands step by step by step. So, verses 17 to 19, we see Moses forming the tabernacle and its spaces, verses 20 to 29, we see Moses filling the tabernacle with the furniture and different... and altars and bread of the presence and all the different things that God had told them to put in the tabernacle.

Then verse 30 to 32, we see him preparing for the priest who would manage the operations. And verses 33, he finishes the outer court and its gate. And he does it all precisely as God instructed him.

Seven times in verses 17 to 33, you can see the refrain, as the Lord had commanded Moses. Verse 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, and 32.

So, God commands Moses to set up the tabernacle. They've already made all the stuff for it. He commands Moses to assemble it, to put it together, to set it up, and Moses does it exactly as God has commanded. We already saw that pattern of God giving instructions for the tabernacle in chapters 25 to 31, and the Israelites building the pieces of the tabernacle in chapters 35 to 39.

[9 : 14] And here in chapter 40, we have again that same pattern of God's commands and Moses' careful obedience fulfilling them. So, the account concludes verse 33, the first half of the chapter concludes, so Moses finished the work. It's the same words that conclude the account of creation in Genesis chapter 2 verse 2. God finished His work of forming and filling the earth.

And that's not just a coincidence. The tabernacle is actually a microcosm of God's creation, as it was meant to be. It was a bit like a miniature garden of Eden. I don't have time to point out all the parallels right now, but there are many. And just as God had appointed Adam to work and guard the garden, He now appoints the priests to work and guard the tabernacle where God would come to dwell with His people. And that's what we see in the second half of chapter 40 when Moses set up the tabernacle, God's glory comes down. God comes to live in the house that His people have built for Him. The cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Now, those aren't two different structures. Earlier after the golden calf, Moses built a separate tent of meeting outside the camp. It's not completely clear what happened to that tent. Some people think it was sort of left alone, and the tabernacle became the tent of meeting. Some people think it was incorporated into the tabernacle. The text doesn't really tell us. But calling it the tent of meeting... but here they're referring to the same thing. Calling it the tent of meeting emphasizes this is the place where God has come to meet with His people. Calling it the tabernacle emphasizes this is God's house. This is not the people's house where God comes to visit and be the guest.

No, this is God's house where the people come to visit and be the guests. Now, verse 35 says, the cloud settled on it. This is the same cloud that had gone before the people, guiding them through the wilderness after they left Egypt. The same cloud that stood behind them, shielding them from the Egyptian armies at the Red Sea. The same cloud that the people had seen on top of Mount Sinai from far away. The same cloud that descended outside the camp and spoke to Moses after the golden calf incident in the tent of meeting. And now this cloud had come to dwell in the midst of the people. The tabernacle would be set up in the middle of the Israelite camp and everything else would be set up around it. In other words, God has come to dwell in the midst of His people.

Now, the cloud that these verses are talking about is not one of those... we shouldn't think of one of those nice puffy white clouds that might be floating through the sky on a day like today, that you look up and think, oh, what a nice day with puffy white clouds in the sky. No.

[12:12] Throughout Exodus, the cloud of God's glory is awesome and frightening. When the cloud descended on Mount Sinai, there was thunder and lightning. So, think a storm cloud. The appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire. The cloud is like a container that shields the people of Israel from coming into direct contact with the all-consuming fire of God. But it's an awesome and frightening thing. That's why it appears as fire by night. It's not that it morphs into something else. It's a glowing cloud during the day, and it looks like fire by night. So, the tabernacle went up, and God's glory came down. Now, in one sense, what we see here in chapter 40 is that the people of Israel have arrived at the goal to which the story of Exodus has been leading all along. If you go back to chapter 25, verse 8, the beginning of the third section of Exodus, God said to Moses, let the people make me a sanctuary, a holy place that I may dwell in their midst. Well, Moses finishes a work, and God comes to dwell among His people. And God followed through on His plan despite the people's major failure in worshiping the golden calf. God followed through on His promise despite the people's sin. So, we see the constancy and faithfulness of God's purpose here. Or if you go further back in Exodus, back when the people of Israel were in Egypt, what did

Moses say to Pharaoh over and over and over again? Let my people go so that they may worship me, so they may serve me. The people have gone from being unwilling slaves of Pharaoh, oppressed, and Pharaoh trying to annihilate them to being willing servants of the Most High God who have been given life.

Or if you go back to the beginning of Exodus, if you remember those first two chapters, the time when it seemed like God was absent and distant, He was there behind the scenes, but it seemed like they were far from His presence. And now, God is visibly present among them in the glory and the cloud and the tabernacle. So, what we see here is a very fitting conclusion to the book, from God's seeming absence to God's manifest presence, from slavery in Egypt to the service of God. But in another sense, the story of Exodus as it ends here is not yet complete.

Verse 35, Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it. Isn't that interesting? When the cloud descended on Mount Sinai, God called Moses to come to the top and enter the cloud, enter the presence of the Lord. But here, Moses can't go in, and no one else can either. Now, in one sense, this is supposed to point us forward to Leviticus. If you read Leviticus chapter 1, verse 1, the Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting. And Leviticus is a whole bunch of instructions about how the people of Israel are supposed to enter God's house the tabernacle, recognizing that God's the owner of the house, and that He's a holy God, and you can't just come in any way you want. And so, Leviticus lays out all kinds of laws about sacrifices that need to be offered. And then in verse 36 to 38, we see the people of Israel haven't yet reached their final destination. They're still on a journey. Twice in verse 36 and in verse 38, it says throughout all their journeys. Verse 36 and 37, He used the same word which is translated set out.

And that points us forward to Numbers. If you read Numbers, it picks up the story of the people's journeys through the wilderness toward the promised land, and yet that becomes a pretty winding path. And then even when they enter the promised land, well, things aren't quite the way they should be.

[16:16] You see, every year the people of Israel were supposed to remember the story of the Exodus. It was the rhythm of their three major annual gatherings. The Passover in the spring, remembering God saves. The Pentecost in the early summer where the people remembered God gave us His law.

And the festival of Tabernacles in the fall where they celebrated, God dwells with us. So, every year they were meant to remember the God who saves and instructs and dwells with us. But if you read the rest of the Old Testament, they keep forgetting.

They stop believing that God is mighty to save, and instead they take matters into their own hands. Or they look to something else or someone else to be their Savior. Or they stop following God's instructions and just decide to do whatever they want. Or they stop longing for God's presence and look to something else, usually an idol, that seems more immediately satisfying.

You see, the rest of the story of the Old Testament is the people continually forgetting this story of God who saves and instructs and dwells with them. But whenever they forgot the story of the Exodus, what we see is they had to relive it. Because their unbelief and their disobedience and their idol worship would eventually lead them back into slavery and to a place where it seemed that God was very far away because they, their sin, had separated them from God.

And then finally, in their misery, they'd cry out for mercy. And God would hear and answer them and save them again and instruct them again and come near to them again. And then some years would pass and the cycle would repeat itself over and over again. If you read the book of Judges, this cycle happens about seven times in the book, over and over and over again.

[18:14] And it happens throughout the rest of the Old Testament. And so, the Old Testament ends with...we see that the God of the Bible is always the same God of Exodus, the God who saves and instructs and dwells with His people. But like the end of Exodus, the story of the Old Testament never quite reaches its goal because the people keep forgetting.

So, that's how the story of Exodus ends and a bit how the story of the Old Testament ends. But what does it mean? What does this all mean? Andrew, do I need to use a pulpit mic or is it mic on here?

Not quite sure which one...down. Okay. What does the story of Exodus mean? Well, we've seen all along, Exodus is a story about God, the God who saves and instructs and dwells with us. That's what Pastor Nick preached on in his overview sermon back in January. You can go back and listen to that sermon if you weren't here for that. But Exodus introduces us to God. It's one of the most important things it does. It shows us who God is, the one and only true and living God, the great I am, the God of mercy and justice. And we've seen Exodus as a story about Israel, where Israel becomes not just a family, the family of Abraham, but a nation in its own right.

And we've seen how the story of Exodus echoes through the rest of the Old Testament, and the people are taught to remember the story, and yet when they forget the story, they have to relive it and remember it the hard way. But we've also seen as we've gone through Exodus that Exodus points us forward to Jesus, points us forward to the one who would save and instruct and dwell with his people in an even greater way.

What do we see in Jesus? We see that he is the one who knows our sufferings, like God did when the people were enslaved in Egypt. We see that Jesus comes near to us and is sympathetic to us. And we've seen that he stands up for us, like Moses stood up for the people before Pharaoh and said, let my people go. And in the New Testament, we see that Jesus stands up to the devil and says, let my people go. They are mine. I have come to liberate them.

[20 : 43] And we've seen that Jesus is our Passover lamb who shields us from God's righteous judgment that we deserve for our sin. Jesus is the one who's made a way out, like Moses and God made a way for the people of Israel out of Egypt. Jesus has made a way out of sin and death. He brings us through the waters of the Red Sea, the waters of baptism, and we can stand on the other side and sing a song of victory, knowing that we have a God who saves. But Jesus is also the one who sustains us, who gives us food in the desert and water from the rock and help along the way. We saw that section in the middle between leaving Egypt and coming to Sinai, where God sustains them through the wilderness, the same God who saved them. And in the New Testament, we also see that Jesus is the one who instructs us. He's our lawgiver, our wonderful counselor. And then he's the one who draws us near to God. He's our sacrifice and our great high priest and the very presence of God, the temple of God, who pours out his Spirit upon us.

And because Exodus points us to Jesus, for all of us who are Christians, Exodus is not just a story about, that shows us who God is. It's not just a story about Israel, but it's also our story. This is the question I want us to ask. Is Exodus your story that you're living in? The story of a God who saves and a God who instructs and a God who indwells.

This is the story that we are meant to live in and live out of. What does that mean? Three things. We tell the story of a God who saved us. You see, true Christians are never the heroes of their own story. You know, the Bible does not say what many people think it says, God helps those who help themselves. The Bible shows us that God helps those who are helpless and hopeless and cry out to Him for mercy, like the Israelites enslaved in Egypt. They couldn't fix, they couldn't fix their own situation. They couldn't free themselves.

And that's where the book of Exodus begins. That's where our story begins, if we are believers in Jesus. The Bible says we are all deeply flawed, far more than we acknowledge or recognize or care to admit, and that we cannot save ourselves. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians, you were dead in your sins, and you have been raised to life in Christ.

You have been saved by grace, not by your own achievements. And this story of a God who saves is what distinguishes the God of the Bible from the God that many other religions talk about.

[23 : 44] It's one of the main differences between biblical faith and many other religions, because many other religions don't start with a God who rescues those who are helpless and hopeless.

Many other religions will start with the law. They will say, this is the path you must follow. These are the pillars that you must obey. And if you follow these commands, then you will obtain salvation. You will escape the cycle of karma. You will enter nirvana. But the Bible says Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, not to give a little help to people who have it mostly all together, not to give us a program to follow that we can carry out on our own, but to rescue us by his blood shed on the cross. Now, telling the story of a God who has saved us is both deeply humbling and confidence building and confidence building at the same time. It's humbling because as Christians, we can't boast in our spiritual or religious achievements.

And it's confidence building because our identity is rooted in an unshakable source of security in the saving love of God that is not based on our performance. That's the first part of living in the Exodus story, is telling the story of a God who has saved us.

But the second part of the story, Exodus doesn't end there, the second part of the story is the God who instructs us. And if the first part of the story distinguishes Christianity or biblical faith from many other religions, the second part of the story distinguishes biblical faith from modern secularism, which idealizes freedom from all constraint to be whoever you define yourself to be.

The retired Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy expressed this well in his quote where he said, at the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.

[26 : 01] That's the modern vision of liberation, the right to define your own vision of existence and meaning and the mystery of life. But that's actually not biblical freedom.

God did not save the people from slavery under Pharaoh so that they could be free to invent their own meaning, which, by the way, can change pretty quickly when you're the author of it.

It's not a very stable source. But God did not save his people from slavery under Pharaoh so they could do their own thing or just so they could feel better. God saved them so they could learn his ways and follow his commands. Or as Ephesians 2 says, we are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Now, of course, many of the laws in Exodus would have seemed strange and perplexing and hard to follow for the Israelites. And inevitably, some of God's commands in the New Testament may initially seem strange and perplexing and hard for us to follow as well. And for this reason, many people simply ignore or avoid the commands in the Bible that they don't like. But let me ask you this question. If there is a God who is eternal and transcendent and wise, and if that God chose to put his thoughts into a book, do you expect that that book will only confirm what you already know to be the case and never challenge any of your deeply held assumptions? That doesn't make sense. And if we can ignore the parts of the Bible that don't fit with our 21st century secular Western cultural sensibilities, why should we expect people from other cultures and other times in history to take to heart biblical teachings that we think are important and they think are strange? That's hypocritical. We must not pick and choose the commands of God that appeal to us and ignore the rest. Sometimes we have to wrestle with challenging texts.

We've done that in our journey through Exodus. Sometimes we have to untangle the mess when God's commands have been twisted out of context and misapplied in hurtful and damaging ways.

Sometimes we have to carefully compare one Scripture with another to keep the big picture in mind. But if Exodus is our story, we must be a people not only who celebrate our freedom in Christ, but also who are continually seeking to be shaped by God's instruction.

[28 : 49] But third and finally, if Exodus is our story, what it means for us is that we tell the story of a God who comes to dwell among us. Now, some of you, some of us, have spent many years in churches like Trinity that preach the gospel of grace and teach the commands of the Bible. But for those of us, I wonder if this third part of the story is the part that we can most easily take for granted and neglect.

We rest secure in our salvation by grace. We diligently seek to obey God's commands. But do we long for the cloud and the fire?

Do we long for God's manifest presence? Do we cherish the gift that Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit himself, our helper, our advocate? The Bible says the Holy Spirit is the one who prays within us when we don't know what to say.

The one who empowers us for works of service, that bring glory to Jesus, the one who assures us inwardly that we belong to God as his sons and daughters. Do we seek to be continually filled with that Holy Spirit as Ephesians 5 exhorts us? Do we long for the presence of God, like the author of Psalm 84 that we read earlier in the service?

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul longs and even faints for the courts of the Lord. My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. Better is one day in your courts, one day in your presence than a thousand elsewhere. Think of Song of Songs. The Song of Solomon speaks poetically about the passionate pursuit of a lover and his beloved. Do we long for intimate and unhindered and ever-growing union with God, like an engaged couple eagerly anticipates the union they will enjoy on their wedding day and after that?

[30 : 58] Do we wake up every morning asking God to go with us? There's an old Irish prayer attributed to St. Patrick that goes like this.

I rise today through God's strength to pilot me, God's might to uphold me, God's wisdom to guide me, God's eye to look before me, God's ear to hear me, God's word to speak for me, God's hand to guard me, God's way to lie before me, God's shield to protect me, God's host to save me from snares of the devil, from temptations of vices, from everyone who desires me ill. Christ be with me, Christ go before me, Christ stay behind me, Christ dwell in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, on my left, when I lie down, when I sit down, Christ in the eye that sees me, Christ in the ear that hears me.

Do we long for the presence of God to dwell in us and with us like that? See, when we look at the story of Exodus, the appropriate response to part one of the story, God saves us, is faith. The appropriate response to the second part of the story, God instructs us, is to obey. But the appropriate response to the third part of the story, God dwells with us, is love. Paul says at the end of the day, faith, hope, and love, these three remain, but the greatest of these is love. So the end of Exodus is an invitation to grow in our love for God and in our longing for his presence, his presence through all our journeys and his presence at the end of the road, when one day we will see him face to face. But finally, perhaps some of you are, find it hard to long for God's presence because it's been a very long time since you felt it.

Maybe you feel like you've been, maybe you've been exploring Christianity for some time. You've been learning about this message and this story, but you're still wondering if this God is real and if he is for you. Perhaps you've gone through the school of hard knocks. The journey you've traveled so far has been winding and arduous, and yet the end of the road seems nowhere in sight.

Let me end with this anecdote. In the fifth book of the Chronicles of Narnia, the horse and his boy, the main character Shasta reaches a point in his journey when he is all alone, very hungry, extremely tired, and apparently lost. He's always had a hard life. He was abandoned as a baby, he was raised by a very strict fisherman. One day the fisherman agreed to sell him into slavery.

[34 : 13] Before he could do that, Shasta ran away. He left his home country and headed for Narnia, which he had only heard of and ever seen. Along his journey, he was chased by lions and nearly drowned in a river trying to escape them. He nearly fainted while crossing a blazing hot desert. Again, he was chased by a lion who wounded his companion. When he finally made it to Narnia, he was separated from his companion and lost the trail high up in the unfamiliar mountains, in the ice and fog.

And it goes, and here's what happens there. Being very tired and having nothing inside him, Shasta felt so sorry for himself that the tears rolled down his cheeks. What put a stop to all of this was a sudden fright. Shasta discovered that someone or somebody was walking beside him. It was pitch dark and he could see nothing. And the thing or person was going so quietly that he could hardly hear any footfalls. What he could hear was breathing on a very large scale.

At last, he could bear it no longer. Who are you? He said. One who has waited long for you to speak, said the thing. Its voice was not loud, but very large and deep. Are you a giant? asked Shasta.

You might call me a giant, said the large voice, but I am not like the creatures you call giants. Then he said almost in a scream, you're not something dead, are you? Oh, please, please do go away.

Once more, he felt the warm breath of the thing on his hand and face. There it said, this is not the breath of a ghost. Tell me your sorrows. Shasta told how he had never known his real father or mother and had been brought up sternly by the fishermen. And then he told the story of his escape and how they were chased by lions and forced to swim for their lives and of all the dangers in the city and about the night he spent in the graveyard and how the beasts howled at him out of the desert. And he told about the heat and thirst of their desert journey and how they were almost at their goal when another lion chased them and wounded his companion.

[36 : 17] I do not call you unfortunate, said the large voice. Don't you think it was bad luck to meet so many lions, said Shasta. There was only one lion, said the voice. How do you know, said Shasta.

Shasta. I was the lion. And as Shasta gaped with open mouth and said nothing, the voice continued. I was the lion who forced you to join with your companion. I was the cat who comforted you in the graveyard. I was the lion who drove the jackals from you as you slept. I was the lion who gave the horses the new strength of fear for the last mile that you should reach King Loon in time.

And I was the lion you do not remember, who pushed the boat in which you lay, a child near death, so that it came to shore where a man sat awake at midnight to receive you. Who are you, said Shasta.

Myself, said the voice, very deep and low so that the earth shook. And again, myself, loud and clear and joyful. And then the third time, myself, whispered so softly you could hardly hear it.

The mist was turning from black to gray and gray to white. The night was over at last. He turned and saw, pacing beside him, a lion. It was from the lion that the light came. No one ever saw anything more terrible or more beautiful. After one glance at the lion's face, he slipped out of the saddle and fell at his feet. He couldn't say anything, but then he didn't want to say anything, and he knew he didn't need to say anything. The high king above all kings stooped towards him and touched his forehead with its tongue. He lifted his face and their eyes met. Then instantly the pale brightness of the mist and the fiery brightness of the lion rolled themselves together into a swirling glory and gathered themselves up and disappeared. There's one who's been with you through all your journeys, even when you didn't recognize him. Through your darkest nights and through your failures and your laziness and your arrogance and your wounds and his purpose all along has been to draw you to himself and bring you into his glorious presence. Will you tell him your sorrows? Will you fall at his feet? Will you let your story be caught up in his?

[38 : 37] Father, thank you that you have searched us out, that you have known us long before we even thought of you. We thank you that you have been there even when you seemed absent and distant.

And we thank you that you, in Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit, are drawing us to yourself. We pray that you would guide us in all of our journeys, that you would give us a longing for your presence to be with us now and for your presence that we will enjoy forever.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.