

Elder Vernon Johnson
Animals
Camel

The camel in the scriptures is a beast of burden. It was the largest animal among the Israelites and was used to carry burdens and for carrying people. It appeared to be the animal of choice for transportation by the common people. In the scriptures, the descriptions of the characteristics and works of the camels parallel in many ways the works and characteristics of the gospel ministry.

In the 24th Chapter of Genesis when Abraham sent his servant to find a bride for his son Isaac, he sent the servant with 10 camels loaded down with riches to give to the future bride and her family and to show to them the wealth of Isaac, the bridegroom. Gen. 24:10 “And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. 11 And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.” Similarly, the gospel ministers carry in their messages from the Lord the riches of their master to God’s waiting people. To carry this message, the gospel ministers must kneel down before their Lord to receive the messages to deliver to the people and then at the time to deliver the messages, they must kneel down again before their Lord in order to unload their messages to God’s waiting people. This is in similitude to the camel which must kneel down to receive its burden and then kneel down to unload its burden.

Moreover, like the camels in the 24th chapter of Genesis who received the water from Rebekah, the gospel ministers often receive the blessings of service in many ways from the Lord’s people they serve: Gen. 24:19 “And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. 20 And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.” Paul set forth this principle for the relationship between the church members and the gospel ministers in 1 Cor. 9:7 “Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? 8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? 9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? 12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used

this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. 13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? 14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

When Rebekah came to meet Isaac, she came riding on the back of a camel. However, when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel and came to Isaac: Gen. 24:61 “And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. 62 And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country. 63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. 64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.” Likewise, the Lord’s people first hear of Jesus from the preaching of the gospel ministers and often closely associate with the gospel minister and his message. However, when they see Jesus in their own experiences and through the proclamation of those messages, they begin to associate themselves more with the Lord than with the gospel minister, which is what it should be.

When Jacob and his family departed his uncle Laban’s house to go to Jacob’s father’s house they all rode upon camels: Gen. 31:17 “Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels; 18 And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padanaram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.” Jacob’s father was Isaac and in many ways Isaac was a type of Christ. In parallel fashion, we are carried by the message of the gospel minister from our natural abode and inclinations to our church home in the house of God.

Too often we exalt the gospel minister above what we should. We should remember that the gospel minister is like the camel in that he is unclean of himself: Lev. 11:4 “Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.” Moreover, the gospel minister has to take heed to himself unless he becomes exalted above measure. Like the camel which is large in stature, the gospel minister must ever be watchful that he does not become full of pride. He must humble himself so that he can receive the messages of the Lord and deliver those messages. Just like the camel which has to kneel to receive its burden and also kneel to unload its burden, so must the gospel minister be in his service as well.

The camel is also used in the scriptures to depict the false ministry. Satan has a ministry and they are more numerous than the Lord’s ministry. The camels of the

Midianites, the Amalekites, and the children of the east far outnumbered the camels of the children of Israel: Judg. 6:3 “And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; 4 And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. 5 For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.” However, with the Lord’s direction and deliverance, the false ministry of Satan is no match for the Lord’s ministry. Under the Lord’s guidance and deliverance, Gideon and the three hundred that were with him defeated the tremendous host of the Midianites, Amalekites, and the children of the east. Satan through his ministry would destroy the Lord’s true church, but the Lord fights for her and His true Church prevails.

The false ministry of Satan, like the camels representing them are exalted by the people:

1. Judg. 8:21 “Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks.”

2. Judg. 8:26 “And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels' necks.”

Those camels were worshipped by the Midianites as they had ornaments and chains about their necks. Similarly, the Lord warned us about exalting men in the ministry: Matt. 23:9 “And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. 11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” Even though the Lord gave this very plain warning, yet we see men who call themselves and are called by their congregants: Master, Father, Rabbi, Reverend, etc. Shame on such men who exalt themselves and shame on those people who exalt them in this fashion. The Lord’s true ministry kneels down like the camel and refuses the exaltation of men.

The camels often had precious things to carry:

1. 1 Ki. 10:2 “And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.”

2. 1 Chr. 12:40 “Moreover they that were nigh them, even unto Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought bread on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, and meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly: for there was joy in Israel.”

3. 2 Chr. 9:1 “And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bare spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.”

Likewise, the gospel ministers have precious things they carry to the Lord’s people such as the good news of salvation by grace, messages of comfort, messages of rest, words of encouragement to the Lord’s humble people, messages of admonishment, messages of warning, training in discipleship, messages of hope, training in true worship, etc.