

The Stranger Who Saved the Savior

Key Verse: Exodus 4:25 (KJV) – “Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me.”

The Unlikely Instrument

There is a theme that runs like a golden thread through the tapestry of Scripture—a theme so counterintuitive that it confounds human wisdom at every turn. It is the truth that God repeatedly chooses the foreign, the weak, the despised, and the unexpected to accomplish His greatest works of salvation. We look for God in the familiar, in our own tribe, in those who look like us and think like us. But God, in His infinite wisdom, often sends our help from the very places we least expect it—even from those we have been taught to regard as enemies. We see this truth vividly in the strange and startling story of Zipporah. She appears suddenly in the narrative of Exodus, performs one swift, bloody act, and then largely disappears from view. Yet in that single moment, this obscure Midianite woman—an Arab, a foreigner, a woman from a people who would later become bitter enemies of Israel—became the instrument through which Moses, the great deliverer, was saved. And in her story, we find a profound foreshadowing of how Jesus Christ saves us all.

The Little Bird from Midian

Let us first consider who this woman was. Her name, Zipporah, comes from the Hebrew word *tsipporah*, which means “little bird” or “sparrow.” It is a tender name, suggesting something small, fragile, and easily overlooked. How fitting that a woman with such a modest name would play such a pivotal role in redemptive history! She was one of seven daughters of Reuel, also called Jethro, the priest of Midian. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through his third wife Keturah, but they were not part of the covenant line of Isaac. They were an Arab people who occupied desert areas in southern Transjordan, northern Arabia, and the Sinai.

Zipporah was an Arab. Let that sink in. The woman who saved Moses, the man who would lead Israel out of Egypt, was not an Israelite. She was a foreigner, an outsider, a member of a people group that would later become synonymous with opposition to God's people. The

irony is staggering. Today, the descendants of Isaac and the descendants of Ishmael—Israel and the Arab nations—remain locked in bitter conflict. Yet here, at the very dawn of Israel's national identity, an Arab woman is the one who preserves the life of Israel's greatest deliverer. God, it seems, delights in confounding our categories of who is "us" and who is "them."

The Bloody Bridegroom

The scene itself is one of the most enigmatic and unsettling passages in all of Scripture. Moses, having been called by God at the burning bush, is on his way back to Egypt to confront Pharaoh and lead God's people out of bondage. But then something shocking occurs: "And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him." (Exodus 4:24, KJV). The man chosen to be Israel's deliverer is about to be killed by the very God who sent him. Why? The answer lies in the covenant of circumcision. God had commanded Abraham: "Every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Genesis 17:10, KJV). Any male who was not circumcised was to be "cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (Genesis 17:14, KJV). Moses, the chosen mediator of the covenant, had apparently neglected to circumcise his own son. This was not a minor oversight. It was a breach of the covenant that threatened to disqualify Moses from his mission and even cost him his life.

But then Zipporah acts. "Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me." (Exodus 4:25, KJV) She takes a flint knife—a sharp stone—and performs the circumcision herself. She then touches the foreskin to Moses' feet and declares him a "bloody husband." The phrase is difficult, but its meaning is clear: through the shedding of blood, the covenant is restored, and Moses is saved. "So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision." (Exodus 4:26, KJV)

The Sharp Stone and the Circumcision of Christ

Now here is where the story of Zipporah points us directly to Jesus Christ. The sharp stone that Zipporah used was a flint knife, an instrument of crude, primitive cutting. But in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul speaks of a different kind of circumcision—a circumcision "made without hands": "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him

in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:11-12, KJV)

The sharp stone that Zipporah used to cut away the flesh was a type, a shadow, of something far greater. The “circumcision of Christ” is not a physical cutting but a spiritual one—the putting off of the body of sin, the removal of the old Adamic nature that separates us from God. And this circumcision is accomplished not by a stone knife, but by the cross. Paul continues: “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” (Colossians 2:13-14, KJV)

Just as Zipporah's swift action with the sharp stone removed the barrier of uncircumcision and saved Moses from death, so Christ's death on the cross removes the barrier of our sin and saves us from eternal death. The sharp stone was a tool of bloodshed; the cross was the ultimate instrument of bloodshed. Zipporah shed the blood of her son to save her husband; God the Father shed the blood of His Son to save His bride, the Church. Zipporah declared Moses a “bloody husband” because blood had sealed their covenant. Jesus Christ is our “bloody Bridegroom”—the One who purchased His bride not with silver or gold, but with His own precious blood.

The Enemy Who Saves

But there is another layer to this story that we must not miss. Zipporah was not only a woman in a patriarchal culture—she was a foreigner, an Arab, from a people who would later be counted among Israel's enemies. And yet, God used her to save Moses, who would in turn save Israel. This is the theme that runs throughout Scripture: God chooses the outsider, the foreigner, the one we despise, to be the agent of His salvation. Consider the Good Samaritan. When Jesus told the parable of the man who fell among thieves, the priest passed by, the Levite passed by, but “a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him” (Luke 10:33, KJV). The Samaritans were despised by the Jews. They were considered half-breeds, heretics, enemies. Yet in Jesus' story, it is the Samaritan—the foreigner, the enemy—who shows mercy and saves the wounded man. Jesus used this parable to shatter the prejudices of His hearers, teaching them that neighborliness knows no ethnic or national boundaries. The one we call enemy may be the very one God sends to save us.

Consider also Rahab. She was a Canaanite prostitute, a woman from a nation doomed to destruction. Yet she hid the Israelite spies and saved them from death. And not only did she save them, but she and her household were saved, and she became an ancestor of Jesus Christ Himself. A Canaanite harlot in the lineage of the Messiah! God chose the most unexpected, the most despised, to be part of His redemptive plan. Consider Naaman the Syrian. He was a leper, an enemy commander from a nation that oppressed Israel. Yet it was a captive Israelite slave girl who told him about the prophet Elisha, and it was through obedience to the prophet that Naaman was cleansed. God sent healing to an enemy through the testimony of a slave.

Consider the woman of Samaria at the well. She was a foreigner, a woman of questionable reputation, yet Jesus chose her to be the first evangelist to her people. She went and told the whole city about the Messiah, and many believed because of her testimony. And consider the greatest irony of all: the salvation of the world came through a Jewish carpenter from Nazareth, a man whom His own people largely rejected. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11, KJV). The world's Savior was despised and rejected by His own, yet through His rejection, salvation came to the Gentiles—to us who were once foreigners and enemies.

The Foolishness of God

The Apostle Paul understood this divine irony better than anyone. He wrote: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.” (1 Corinthians 1:18-19, KJV) “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.” (1 Corinthians 1:27-28, KJV)

God chose a little bird from Midian—a foreign woman from an enemy nation—to save the great deliverer. God chose a Samaritan—a heretic and an enemy—to show what true neighborly love looks like. God chose a Canaanite harlot to be in the lineage of His Son. God chose a Syrian commander to receive a miracle of healing. God chose fishermen, tax collectors, and despised women to be His apostles and witnesses. And God chose the cross—

the most shameful, despised form of execution in the ancient world—to be the instrument of our salvation.

Conclusion: Who Is Your Zipporah?

The question for us today is this: Who are the Zipporahs in our lives? Who are the people we have written off as foreigners, outsiders, enemies—people whom God might be using to save us? We live in a world of division, of tribalism, of us-versus-them. We draw lines around our churches, our nations, our ethnic groups, and we decide who is in and who is out. But God keeps crossing our lines. He keeps sending help from the most unexpected places. Perhaps the person you have been taught to despise is the very person God will use to bring you salvation. Perhaps the answer to your prayers is coming from the Arab world, the Samaritan, the foreigner, the one you have called enemy. Perhaps the sharp stone that will cut away your sin is in the hand of someone you least expect.

Zipporah, the little bird from Midian, saved Moses. And Moses went on to save Israel. But the greater truth is this: Jesus Christ, the ultimate Deliverer, was saved for us—not by a sharp stone, but by the wood of the cross. And in His death and resurrection, He has circumcised our hearts, putting off the body of sin, and has made us His own. He is our bloody Bridegroom, the One who purchased us with His own blood. Let us not be like the priest and the Levite who passed by on the other side. Let us not be like those who despise the foreigner and the outsider. Let us open our eyes to see that God is at work in unexpected places, through unexpected people, to accomplish His unexpected salvation. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

And let us remember that the One who saved us was Himself a stranger, despised and rejected of men. But through His rejection, we have been accepted. Through His blood, we have been saved. Amen.