

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS #25:

BIBLE ROADS

By John Temples

Almost from the beginning of time, man has built roads, streets, and highways. Perhaps the first reference to a road in the Bible is Gen 3:24—“So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” Even heaven is described as having roads. “And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass” (Revelation 21:21). Several roads are mentioned in the Bible, and there are some lessons we can learn from them.

THE ROAD FROM JERUSALEM TO JERICHO--THE BUSIEST ROAD IN ISRAEL

Commercial caravans, priests, and ordinary travelers were constantly on this road, even though it was a treacherous, winding way. Johnson’s New Testament Notes says, “It was a constant descent from Jerusalem to Jericho, over 3,000 feet in 18 miles. The road is a dark, desolate mountain pass, so beset by robbers that no traveler dared to go through it without a guard.”

But this road was a road representing opportunity. Luke 19:1-6—“Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zaccheus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” Zaccheus seized an opportunity on this road and his life was changed forever.

It was also on this road that two blind men found healing. Matt 20:29-34—“Now as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David! Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, Have mercy on

us, O Lord, Son of David! So Jesus stood still and called them and said, What do you want me to do for you? They said to Him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.” This road was also the setting for the parable of the good Samaritan.

The road in front of your house is also a road of opportunity--a way to go and speak a kind word to someone, to visit the sick, to teach a lost soul, to enrich knowledge.

THE ROAD FROM JERUSALEM TO GAZA

This was also a road of opportunity for the Ethiopian eunuch. Acts 8:26-31—“Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, Go near and overtake this chariot. So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, Do you understand what you are reading? And he said, How can I unless someone guides me? And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.”

On this road, the eunuch became the first African to obey the gospel. But it did not look much like a road of opportunity--verse 26 says it was “desert.” (Not sage brush and cacti, but desolate and uninhabited.) The eunuch probably dreaded that part of his trip; it was long and boring. He probably thought, “Nothing important could ever happen here.” But he was in the right frame of mind to be blessed by God. Sometimes the road of our life takes us to a seemingly “deserted” place. But if it does, rest assured that God has some purpose for our being there.

This road was also a road of opportunity for the evangelist Philip. God called him away from a successful gospel meeting in Samaria. The angel told him what road to take, but not what to do or how far to go. It required some faith on his part.

This suggests that the road of our life is not mapped out for us. We find ourselves in various circumstances and places from time to time. God expects us to use our powers of observation to discover why we are there and what we can do to glorify Him.

THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS, WHERE PAUL'S LIFE WAS FOREVER CHANGED

Acts 9:1-6—“Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. And as he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? And he said, Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads. So he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what do you want me to do? And the Lord said to him, Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

We might say that this road represents a crisis or moment of truth. It was here that Paul discovered that he had been traveling on the wrong road! He soon found himself on another road, appropriately named Straight Street: “Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Here I am, Lord. So the Lord said to him, Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him so that he might receive his sight” (Acts 9:10-12).

Most roads in Bible times were narrow and winding; Straight Street was almost 100 feet wide and had sidewalks. The lesson is that one day, Paul ended up on a street and in a situation he never thought he would be in. Sometimes in our lives, we come to a moment of truth, a fork in the road, where we must make a choice. One path leads to truth, the other leads to ignorance, error, and sin. Paul unhesitatingly chose to serve Christ, and it led him in new and wonderful paths.

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS--A ROAD SYMBOLIZING DISCOVERY AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Luke 24:13-16—“Now behold, two [disciples] were traveling that same day [the day of X’s resurrection] to a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained so that they did not know Him.”

Later, Christ revealed Himself. Verses 31, 32—“Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, ‘Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?’”

This is a great world we live in. It is God’s world, and it is full of roads to be explored and things to be discovered. And there is another road of discovery and enlightenment available to us: The Information Superhighway (Internet). Never lose your sense of curiosity and thirst for knowledge, especially of the Scriptures!

THE ROAD FROM JERUSALEM TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

Luke 22:39-43—“And coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed; and His disciples followed Him. When He came to the place, He said to them, Pray that you may not enter into temptation. And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless not My will but Yours be done. Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.”

This road might symbolize sorrow, suffering, or destiny. Thankfully, it is a short road. Some roads we have to walk alone, with only God to go with us. Just be assured that when the day comes to walk that road, God will sustain you.

Interestingly, if you continue on that road past the Mount of Olives, you come to Bethany--the site of a resurrection! (Lazarus.)

FIGURATIVE BIBLE ROADS

There are three “roads” mentioned in Scripture that are not physical roads, but are nonetheless real. Two of them are the Broad Way and the Narrow Way. Matthew 7:13,14—“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

The Broad Way is the way, the mode of life, of most people in the world. It is Satan’s way. It is the easy way--wide, flat, and well-marked. It is broad enough for the drunkard to stagger along with his bottle and wide enough for the thief to drag along his loot. The Narrow Way is uphill and narrow, but it leads to heaven and eternal life.

One final symbolic Bible road is the “Highway of Holiness.” Isaiah 35:8,9—“A highway shall be there, and a road; and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; it shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there.”

That “highway of holiness” is the church or Christianity. Jesus called Himself “the Way” in John 14:6. And Paul might have been thinking of the Isaiah passage when he called the church “this Way” in Acts 22:4--“I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.”

The lesson for us is that Christianity is indeed a way of life, a course to walk--not a place to sit down and do nothing!

Indeed, there are many lessons in Bible roads. Let us ponder them and be blessed. --John Temples

