

Bible Devotions: Lock Stock & Barrel
Devotional Reading for Outdoorsmen (Old Testament)

Numbers 4:5-6

Badger Skins

When the camp prepares to journey, Aaron and his sons shall come, and they shall take down the covering veil and cover the ark of the Testimony with it. Then they shall put on it a covering of badger skins, and spread over that a cloth entirely of blue; and they shall insert its poles.

A lot of work went into the making of the tabernacle and all its provisions. To avoid damaging the most holy things, God instructed Aaron and his sons to exercise great care in packaging and moving the pieces. Even though these items were made from earthly stuff, they came in contact with God when His cloud rested above the tabernacle and His glory filled the holy place (Exodus 40:34-38). It's just one reason why great reverence was required in the handling.

Just think about what happened to Moses when he spoke to God face to face: *the skin of his face shone* (Exodus 34:29). This sounds speculative but somehow I can't help but think that the holy things captured the essence of the glory of God. I don't want to make light of God's glory (absolutely no pun intended) but it's like placing a glow-in-the-dark watch under a lamp to capture the essence of the brightness.

Perhaps to that end, God gave precise instructions on how to cover the holy things with fine cloths and leather. The cloth served as a lining, like silk fabric in a leather jacket. Animal skins provided further protection from the stumbling, bumbling movements of men. Of course, the Israelites didn't have bullet-proof synthetics or bubble wrap; but as long as they were obedient in the way they layered the leather, then leather would do.

Translators differ on the word used here for *badger skins*. Other renderings include goat, porpoise, sea cow, manatee, dugong (a subspecies of manatee), and even just plain old leather. The translation is apparently (and obviously) difficult but that's not the point here.

We're tempted to also digress on the nature of the animals, whether clean or common. This reminds me of Peter's vision in Acts 10:9-16. In his vision, he saw a sheet lowered to the earth which contained all kinds of animals. When he was commanded to kill and eat, Peter refused, calling the creatures common and unclean. He pretty much said that it was against his religion. Then he heard a voice saying, "*What God has cleansed you must not call common*" (Acts 10:15).

It could be that God doesn't mind His glory coming near the things that He has cleansed and that we call common and unclean. If that is true, then it really doesn't matter what kind of leather was used to cover the holy things.

In fact, I'm glad it's true. For even though we are made of earthly stuff, we are made in the image of God. When we're covered and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, we are never more known to be common and unclean. Our leathery, human skin merely covers the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). We receive the glory of God (John 17:22). For all this, great reverence is required in the handling.

We might not know the exact kind of leather that was used to carry the holy things but it really doesn't matter. God's glory wasn't partial to badgers, goats, porpoises, sea cows, manatees, dugongs, or anything else. But whatever type of skins they were, they sure had a great honor.

God's glory isn't partial to people either, the main lesson in Peter's vision (Acts 10:28). And what an honor it is for any type of human skin to come into the presence of the glory of God.

Bible Devotions: Hook Line & Sinker (study guide)

Numbers 4:5-6
Badger Skins

HOOK

1. What leather product do you use the most and from what animal was it made?

2. Name two types of fabric you rely upon for your outdoor clothing. Tell why you like these.

3. Describe how you would make a soft gun case to carry a very expensive firearm.

LINE

Even though the holy things were made from earthly stuff, they came in contact with God when His cloud rested above the tabernacle and His glory filled the holy place. It's just one reason why great reverence was required in the handling.

It could be that God doesn't mind His glory coming near the things that He has cleansed and that we call common and unclean. If that is true, then it really doesn't matter what kind of leather was used to cover the holy things.

In fact, I'm glad it's true. For even though we are made of earthly stuff, we are made in the image of God. When we're covered and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, we are never more known to be common and unclean. Our leathery, human skin merely covers the temple of the Holy Spirit. We receive the glory of God. For all this, great reverence is required in the handling.

What does it mean to be washed in the blood of the Lamb? If you do not know, will you discuss this with a Christian friend? If you do know, describe it in a way that anyone can understand.

Describe how others know that you are a Christian. What more can you do to make sure others know you belong to God? If not a Christian, will you talk to a Christian friend about Jesus?

SINKER

Take a few minutes to write your thoughts on this devotional. Reflect on your own experiences.

Key words: leather glory holy things

Copyright © 2005 Don Hamlin. Permission is granted to reproduce this page.