

EXODUS 18:1-27 A FRIENDLY VISIT

After reading about the trials, complaints, and battles of the Israelites in the wilderness, we now move into a chapter that shows a little relief for them. We will see here that there is a slightly more normal way of life here, for at least a little while. It becomes a place for family fellowship and daily business. Everyday living isn't always trials and testing, and battles, although it may seem that way sometimes. These are the things we remember more often, however. Charles Spurgeon said that God's people are prone to engrave their trials in marble and write their blessings in the sand.

We have been seeing so much complaining about lack of water and food, that it was like a broken record. It almost seemed repetitious, but so goes the human nature, when man doesn't get what he wants, when he wants, he grumbles and moans and groans. God was teaching the Israelites about who He was as He gave them tests and then faithfully provided for them even when they failed. We have certainly seen His mercy and grace in the previous chapters. In this chapter, we get a demonstration of praise and worship. What a change of pace, as a transition takes place in Exodus. Praising is much better than complaining.

The first 12 verses look back, recapping the great things God had done for His people. The last 15 verses highlight Moses' father-in-law counseling Moses on how he was to delegate his authority to others.

1. PRAISE TO THE GOD OF MOSES-- 18:1-12

A. HEARING WHAT GOD HAD DONE - V 1

Back in chapter two, we met Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. He appears again after Moses and Israel had gone through the plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea. He is the priest of Midian.—There was another priest mentioned before, who was a Gentile, named Melchizedek-Gen 14:17-24, Ex 2:16 tells us that Jethro was a priest of Midian when Moses lived there with them. We are not told whether he was a priest of Yahweh at that time, or even at the present time, but one thing is for sure, he learned much more of Yahweh as he hears about what He had done in Egypt for Moses and the Israelites. In chapter 17 we witnessed the attack of a foreign group of people, the Amalekites. They were the enemies. What a contrast we see here from someone who was a foreigner, but this time we see a friendly visitor.

Jethro was from Midia so it would be good to look at a little of the history of the Midianites—

Gen 25:2,37:28,Num 22:7,25:17,Jud6-7—This shows to us that on other occasions Midia was a definite enemy of Israel. But this time is different.

A question we want to ask, is how did Jethro know what had happened

in Egypt? Maybe Zipporah had told him. Whatever the way, news could travel fast, even in those days, even without the technology and media we have. The news could spread, especially when miracles happen.

B. MORE THAN A FAMILY REUNION VV 2-4

1. When did Moses' wife and sons return home?

We are not told the answer here. Maybe Moses had sent them away when the plagues started in Egypt to escape the wrath of Pharaoh. Calvin presents that they could have been sent away after they had been delivered from Egypt. Or, it even could have been right after the battle with the Amalekites.

There is much more than a family reunion happening here. The sons names are mentioned here, which are very significant. These names remind us of where Moses and the Israelites have been.

2. The meaning of the name Gershom(foreigner) Moses had been a foreigner in a foreign land. That is the way of the Israelites as they had been slaves in Egypt.
3. The meaning of the name Eliezer(God is helper) Moses met God at the burning bush and after that Moses was no longer a lonely stranger. He learned that God was his helper in every sense of the word. Eliezer was a reminder of deliverance, not only for Moses, but also to the Israelites..

C. HEADING TO THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD-V5-6

The Mountain of God is a place where Moses had been before.

Exodus 4:27-28 They are not exactly at that spot but they are in the vicinity. Back in chapter 17, where the rock in Rephidim is mentioned, is in the area of the mountain of God. This is where Jethro meets Moses. This area commands our attention for this is where God is going to give the law and the tabernacle.

D. THE ARRIVAL VV 7-8

The message had been received by Jethro and was acted upon.

The meeting between Moses and Jethro should make us recall when at another time Moses met with another family member in the desert, Aaron found in 4:27-28 Both times include a recounting of what God had done or said.

1. Respectful Greeting---The leader of two million people prostrates himself on the ground before his father-in-law. This was a matter of respect on the part of Moses.
2. Hospitality---They spoke to each other and immediately went into the tent, most likely Moses' tent. They went right into the heart of the matter. That is, praising Yahweh. Jethro was so interested in what had happened as he was going to get the details right from the horses mouth. Moses could not wait a moment to tell him. They did not deal with small talk but got right to the good stuff.
3. The declaration of what God had done
This was all about what God had done, not what Moses had done. What better thing is there to do than make much out of what God has done. We see this quite often in the Psalms.
Psalm 105:2, 145:11-12
God wants His fame spread all throughout the earth.
Moses told about not only God's power, but His providential care.
How great is our God. Moses could not have held anything back.

E. WORSHIP VV 9-12

This is the response of Jethro. He could not help but worship after he heard what God had done. This is the proper response, always.

1. Rejoicing

V 9

He rejoiced for he knew that oppression and brutality had been defeated. This God is mighty and powerful and good. He cares for human beings. This is enough for anyone to rejoice.

2. Glory given to Yahweh

V 10

Out of the streams of joy flows worship and giving glory to God. He is the supreme God who has limitless power and is a good God. He is full of mercy and grace and patience. How fitting this is that a non-Israelite is giving glory to God. This is true worship. Here is a Gentile who is worshipping Yahweh. God had told Abraham that all the world would be blessed by Him.

3. Confession

V 11

To know that God is LORD 6:7, 7:5, 8:10, 9:29

This is what eternal life is, to know God. The Egyptians had so many gods but they didn't know the only God. God demonstrated in Egypt to the Egyptians in no uncertain terms that He defeated their so called gods. Israel needed to know who God was. That was the main purpose of God. They were to know who He really was. God kept revealing Himself in so many ways.

4. Sacrifice

After Jethro recognized the worth of God, he could do no other than to sacrifice to this one true God. This is a sign of full commitment. He was so overjoyed that he gave glory and worshipped Yahweh and confessed Him, he now wanted to show his respect and awe and give something of himself.

Burnt offerings and sacrifice----10:25 "This is what begins to happen at this point. This is the first installment on the importance placed on sacrifice in following chapters." Peter Enns This is significant.

Bread---Communion

The bread is most likely the heavenly manna that Moses gives to him as they all take part in this spiritual moment in fellowshiping with each other and worshipping God. This kind of fellowship anticipated the time when Messiah would die for the sins of the people and make redemption. To worship God is to worship Yahweh. As He has recognized Him as Yahweh, he also calls Him Elohim. This priest knew what to do. This was a festive meal to the praise of God.

1. God is the initiator of worship. As in every aspect of life, God is the first-mover. God initiated the creation of the world. God initiated the nation of Israel. God initiated the plan of salvation. God initiated our personal salvation. God will initiate the end of this age through the coming of Christ. This is the pattern of everything: God initiates. So, we should reflect this pattern (as much as possible) in our corporate gatherings.

2. Worship is a response to God's nature and actions. God initiates; we respond. God reveals Himself; we worship Him. God speaks; we listen and obey. We need to position ourselves under God's Word as quickly as possible when we gather.

3. Worship is based on the character of God. If we try to worship God apart from His self-revelation, we will end up worshipping a false god. God is a specific God, with attributes and desires and plans. The only way to ensure that we actually worship God is to fill our minds with how He has revealed Himself.

4. We cannot worship God apart from the work of Christ. The main reason we need a Call to Worship is to be reminded that apart from Christ, our worship would be completely unacceptable to God. We must always approach God through the person and work of the Son.

2. COUNSEL TO MOSES

18:13-27

A. THE TASK

13-16

1. Moses, the judge

He arbitrated legal issues between parties. He took all the cases.

Moses was dead tired after keeping up the pace all day. Moses was in over his head and things couldn't go on much longer like this. He needed to be free from the mass of administration that was taking all his effort and time. He needed to focus on the main thing, communicating the covenant to the people. This looks to Mt Sinai and the giving of the law.

2. Jethro, the observer

After Jethro watched Moses during the day, he gave a much needed remedy to a problematic situation. His advice was very detailed. He might have had experience in these kind of manners in that he was a priest.

3. Moses' explanation

B. THE WARNING

17-18

Jethro told him that he would wear himself out if he didn't get some help. Jethro said that this was not good.

C. THE COUNSEL

19-23

1. People's representative before God

Moses was to have superiority over his chosen helpers in that he is the people's representative before God.

2. Teach laws

He was to warn them and admonish them.

3. Select godly men Acts 6:1-7 The qualifications here remind us of the early church and their choosing the right men to serve the people in Jerusalem. They were to have good reputations be full of the Spirit and wisdom, and approved by the people.

4. Moses to only have difficult cases

D. MOSES TAKES ADVICE

24-27

Moses did not hesitate. It might have been a relief to him.

Moses listened to his father in law and put the plan into operation.

It worked well. Jethro's advice is what God would have commanded.

By dividing the work, Moses was following God's order given by Jethro. God used a human instrument to get through to his instrument.

God still operates this way.

Deut 1:9-18

Jethro, then left for home. He was an important visitor that came their way. His worship and helping out with giving Moses some wisdom was very valuable at this time. This now prepared them to receive the law at Mt Sinai for that is the next item on the agenda. This was about looking ahead in vv 13-27 as we looked back to what God had done in the first 12 verses.

When we reflect upon what God has done, we cannot keep from praising God. He, then, expects us to carry out His work He has give