

LESSON 9: EXODUS 18

AUGUST 17, 2011

OVERVIEW

- . Moses – the loneliness of a spiritual leader
- . The visit of Jethro – Exodus 18:1-12
- . The task of judging Israel – Exodus 18:13-27
- . Organization of the church

MOSES – THE LONELINESS OF A SPIRITUAL LEADER

- . Moses' task was to help his people see God's spiritual vision
 - . The people didn't necessarily want to see this vision
 - . Change was difficult for them – they wanted to go back
 - . This vision required change and trust – something the people rejected
 - . Moses often found himself very alone and at odds with his people
 - . Forty years earlier he was part of the Pharaoh's inner circle, surrounded by people waiting on him hand and foot
 - . He walked away from all these creature comforts to pursue his relationship with God
 - . Now, forty years later that seemed to be the only true relationship he had
- . God, aware of Moses' loneliness, gives him a valuable boost
 - . He reunites him with family
 - . In Exodus 4, after spending forty years in Midian, he packs up his family and starts to head back to Egypt
 - . On the way he has an encounter with God who wants to kill him
 - . His wife, Zipporah intervenes to save him
 - . Shortly after that event, scholars believe Moses sent the family back to Midian
 - . Now he is reunited with his wife and two sons
 - . Gershom – oldest son whose name means “a stranger there”
 - . Named to honor Moses arriving in Midian in Exodus 2 and being an alien in a foreign land
 - . Eliezer – name means “my God is my helper”
 - . Only time he is mentioned in scripture
 - . God puts a man of wisdom in his path, Jethro, who helps counsel him through these difficult times
 - . Jethro provides Moses with a plan that becomes the foundation for the future governance of Israel

- . This story in Exodus is a reminder that although Moses felt very alone, God was there to provide Moses with the means to survive the ordeal

THE VISIT OF JETHRO – EXODUS 18:1-12

- . Jethro – the priest of Midian – Exodus 18:1
 - . The Midianites were descendents of Abraham
 - . Midian was a son of Abraham by his second wife, Keturah
Genesis 25:1-2
 - . Although they worshipped other gods, as did Israel from time to time, they had a knowledge and understanding of Yahweh
 - . Jethro seemed to have an understanding and deep faith in Yahweh – Exodus 18:10-11
 - . During the forty years in Midian, Jethro had to have provided Moses with spiritual knowledge of who Yahweh was – Exodus 2-3
 - . In some ways Jethro is to Moses what Melchizedek was to Abraham
Genesis 14
 - . Both referred to as priests without any idea of how either was anointed
 - . Both predate the system of Israelite priesthood
 - . Both outside of the Israelite lineage
 - . Both seem to have a profound impact on two of the greatest figures in Israelite history
- . Jethro's arrival – Exodus 18:2-6
 - . Jethro arrives at his meeting place with Moses less than two months after the Passover
 - . The news of the Passover had spread quickly to Midian
 - . The meeting of these two men took place at Rephidim before the Israelites moved to their camp site at Sinai – Exodus 17:8, 19:2
 - . There is some debate about the location of this meeting because of Deuteronomy 1:6-18, but most believe it was at Rephidim
- . The meeting of these two great men – Exodus 8:7
 - . The greeting outlined in Exodus 8:7 infers there was a great deal of respect and affection between these two men
 - . The greeting also highlights Moses' humility, despite his position within the Israelite nation

THE TASK OF JUDGING ISRAEL – EXODUS 18:13-27

- . Moses takes his seat to hear people's judicial complaints
 - . Hundreds of disputes are heard from dawn to dusk
 - . By the end of the day Moses is exhausted

- . Jethro's advice on what Moses should be doing – Exodus 18:13-20
 - . Moses should restrict himself on what he alone, should be doing
 - . Teach them the decrees and laws and show them the duties they should Perform
 - . Moses primary job should be to teach and to pray
- . This foundational approach to church governance is duplicated in the early Christian church – Acts 6:1-4
 - . When early church disputes were brought to the disciples, they decided not to get involved in order to focus on things more important
 - . “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry in order to wait on tables”
 - . Prayer and ministry was exactly what Jethro was encouraging Moses to focus on
 - . Many churches today fail because those who should be teaching are too busy doing other things
- . The appointment of judges from the people – Exodus 18:21-23
 - . Jethro advised Moses to appoint judges to handle all but the most important cases
 - . Select men who fear God
 - . Have them serve as judges at all times, but still have them bring Moses the most important cases
 - . Jethro proposed choosing judges based on four characteristics
 - . Ability – capable men
 - . Piety – men who fear God – Proverbs 9:10
 - . Piety will enhance their respect for fellow men since they recognize all men are made in God's image
 - . Reliability – trustworthy men
 - . Integrity – men who hate dishonest gain
- . Moses' gracious acceptance of Jethro's advise – Exodus 18:24-27
 - . Moses, despite his leadership role, was not too proud to understand the wisdom of Jethro's advise

ORGANIZATION OF CHURCH

- . The basic plan laid out in Exodus 18 serves as the basis for church organization today
 - . Division of responsibility
 - . Flows from the premise that no person possesses all the gifts
 - . God disperses his gifts throughout the body
 - . No one person has the time to do everything
 - . Moses couldn't possibly keep up this pace
 - . Plurality of leadership
 - . Jethro's approach provided a means for equipping new leaders
 - . In Acts we see this principle expanded to create deacons
 - . Notice Jethro, or Paul later, didn't propose just one deacon or Elder

- . The appointing of multiple leaders spreads the responsibility, provides for more leaders and creates accountability
- . Most cults revolve around one strong charismatic leader
- . Spiritual qualifications
 - . Spiritual leaders in a church need to have proper spiritual qualities
 - . Paul was very specific about the spiritual qualities a church leader should possess – 1 Timothy 3:2-13

NEXT LESSON IS WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2011: EXODUS 19-20