

March 5

Scriptures: Read Exodus 18

Key Verse: “Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God.” (Exodus 18:19)

Overview

The news of Israel’s triumph over the Egyptians spread to the surrounding nations. Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law in Midian, heard of it and came to hear more details and to reunite Moses with his wife and two sons after being apart for several months. It seems Moses had sent them back after the circumcision of his son (Exodus 4:24-26) for he may have sensed danger ahead and felt they may have been a hindrance to his mission.

Moses, though a great prophet and leader, humbly bowed before his father-in-law for whom he showed much respect. Jethro, a descendant of Abraham through Katurah (Gen. 25:1-2), was a godly man, and although a Gentile he worshipped the One true and living God. For forty years, Moses had lived under his godly influence. He rejoiced with Moses upon hearing of all that happened in Egypt and the goodness of God in delivering Israel. When we see people come to experience the Lord’s salvation and when other believers tell of God’s goodness, we should give praise to God and rejoice with them. Sharing God’s goodness together is pleasing to the Lord. It helps to edify and encourage one another, like Jethro, whose faith was strengthened when Moses talked with him of God’s goodness (18:11). It is also important to share our salvation with unbelievers, for in hearing, they too may come to believe.

Since the priesthood of Israel had not yet been established, Jethro, a Gentile priest in Midian, led and possibly instigated the offering of a sacrifice in worship to the Lord. Then, along with Moses, Aaron and the elders, he ate of the “bread”. Which we may assume was manna. In eating it, Jethro could literally “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). He, as a Gentile along with the “mixed multitude” (12:38), was welcomed to share in the blessings of the Lord which are available to everyone who will come unto Him. Jethro shared this blessed bread with them “before God” (18:12) and as such we know it was a sanctified, God-centered feast. Fellowship around the table gives opportunity for glorifying God as we centre our conversation on Him and “all His wondrous works: (Psalm 105:2). Of course, all we do should glorify God, not just because His eye is always on us, but out of love for Him and a desire to please Him.

God used Jethro to give very important and wise advice to Moses. Being a godly man, he conditioned his suggestion: “if… God so commands you” (18:23). Nothing should be done out of the will of God. It may be assumed that Moses inquired of the Lord and had the go-ahead to act upon the advice of Jethro. The wise leader is one who will take counsel from other spiritually mature elders. It was common among the ancient Semitic tribes that the leader also be the judge (cf. 1 Samuel 7:15-17), but for Moses it was clear that it was too exhausting for him alone to carry this great responsibility. Because Moses was the spiritual leader, Jethro suggested he spend his time more in prayer (18:19—key verse) for the wisdom needed to lead such a people. With the delegation of qualified, trained men to act as judges, Moses was relieved for greater and more essential duties. Some pastors and other church leaders today need to follow Moses’ example.

Moses perfected an organized system of higher and lower courts which was used by Israel for centuries to come. Moses himself chose the judges, for the children of Israel had proven they were unfit to decide for themselves. The magistrates were required to first come under the training of Moses that they might know the statutes and laws of God and walk upright before Him (18:20). Secondly, their personal qualifications had to meet a certain standard: they were to be “able men”, wise, intelligent, having the fear of God, and only those who loved truth and hated covetousness. This was necessary, for justice is often corrupted when those in authority take bribes.

Prayer

Thank You for using Jethro, anon-Israelite, to show Your love for all people. Reveal Yourself, O God, all over the world, to all people.