
Day 22 - January 22

Establishment of a Nation (1525 - 1400 BCE)

Moses Emerges as a Leader

Readings: *Exodus 1:1-4:31; 6:14-27*

Reflections:

- The first thing to keep in mind is that Exodus is the sequel to Genesis. That means that the themes of Genesis carry on but take on a new focus. Where Genesis is focused on the growth of a family and a line of family leaders, Exodus is focused on one leader in particular, Moses. Yet the overarching contrast between God's way versus our way is apparent throughout this book of the Bible.
- The blessing of growth leads to oppression by the Pharaoh. This is a principle repeated in Scripture. God's blessing doesn't often lead to an easy life, just more opposition from the enemy.
- Israelites are credited for building many of the great structures of Egypt as slaves. There is some historical evidence of the Israelites as slaves in Egypt but not a lot.
- The oppression increases from very hard labor to the killing of the boys. Again, God's blessing results in great pain at first, but he is accomplishing something higher by growing a nation of slaves.
- Moses is from the house of Levi, the Levites would be the tribe of the Priests who will serve in the tabernacle and temple before God.
- God in his sovereignty saves Moses and enables him to be raised in Pharaoh's household. This will provide him with the training he will need to lead the nation.
- Moses first attempt at saving his people through murder results in his exile. Like having Ishmael, again we see people who run ahead of God or miss his heart, and end up creating huge problems for themselves. Moses now runs in fear.
- The suffering of God's people moves his heart. God remembers his promises and is moved with compassion to act. God's heart breaks when his children suffer and cry out to him.
- The burning bush is a familiar story. Interesting that at first Moses is very afraid to see the face of God but in time he will speak with God face to face as a man speaks with his friend.

- God's call to Moses to be a leader and deliverer causes Moses to ask the obvious question, "Who am I?" God doesn't answer this question, but simply says "I am with you." In other words, don't worry, it isn't about you, it is about me! We must remember that this is ultimately God's story.
- Now the first sign God gives is not much help. It isn't a miracle in the moment that would affirm Moses trusting God but simply a promise about the people ending back at that same mountain one day.
- God gives Moses some information about what to say in introducing God to them and where he wants to take them, to the Promised Land. God is quite detailed in explaining exactly what is supposed to happen.
- Moses then asks for some signs to show the people if they don't believe, and God gives him the sign of the staff turning to a snake and signs of what plagues God will use.
- Moses then starts to resist because of the fact that he can't speak very well. His own sense of inadequacy makes him want to bail out. This ultimately makes God angry that Moses responds this way. God was already planning to send Aaron with Moses but he wanted Moses to be willing to go just because God had asked him. Here God promises Moses, "I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do." God is then upfront about the drama that will ensue. God will both command Pharaoh to let his people go but as Pharaoh rebels God will also harden his heart and bring him under judgment.
- As Moses heads out, there is a very strange text, maybe one of the strangest in the entire Bible. It says that the Lord was about to kill Moses. Apparently Moses failed to circumcise his son and adhere to the Abrahamic covenant. It would seem from this text that Moses disregarded what he knew to be the will of God. His wife saves him by circumcising his son and God relents. The key to understanding this text is the context of the passage. Moses is being sent back to Pharaoh to rescue the Israelites. Israel is called God's firstborn son and Pharaoh is warned that if he doesn't release Israel his firstborn son will die. Israel was to be a firstborn son to God that was fully devoted in everything. If Moses was going to lead this nation and teach them what it meant to be fully devoted to God, then he himself had to be fully committed. His son's circumcision was a sign of this. So on the eve of Moses' return to Egypt, God confronts him in a way that's similar to how God confronted Jacob in the night when he wrestled with Jacob (Genesis 32). His wife's obedience highlights her trust in God and is another example of how women are often portrayed as having more faith in God than men (see Tamar, Ruth as other examples). Touching her son's foreskin to Moses' feet was a symbolic act of submission to him and to God. The reference to Moses being her bridegroom is likely referring to his wife acknowledging that he was as good as dead. By this act of submission, she was giving her husband his life back to him. It was like he was her bridegroom for a second time, now a bridegroom sealed in the blood of the covenant with God. This story served as an example to the Israelites of how they were to receive God as their bridegroom in a covenant that was sealed in blood. The severity of God's plan to kill Moses strikes a similar chord to Moses' being prevented from entering the Promised Land

because he struck the rock. Moses' close relationship with God means that he is held to a high standard. As Jesus states in Luke 12:48, "The one entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

- Moses and Aaron meet, explain everything to the elders of Israel and they are ready to go. The stage is set and the showdown is about to begin.