
Day 39 – February 8

Establishment of a Nation (1525 – 1400 BCE)

Moses Rebuked by Miriam

The People Lack Courage

Readings: *Numbers 12:1-16; 13:1-33; 14:1-45*

Reflections:

- The first thing we must notice is that Moses the lawgiver apparently breaks the Law. He takes a Gentile wife and breaks the law about intermarriage (see Deuteronomy 7:3). We would anticipate that the man who communicates the Law that the Israelites should not intermarry would himself not intermarry. This practice will be a huge problem for Israel (see Joshua 23:12-13; 1 Kings 11:2; Ezra 9:14) and one would think God would want to set an example right at the beginning that this should be avoided at all costs. Yet his approach with Moses is the opposite. God's approach is, "He is my friend so leave him alone."
- Moses being the most humble person on earth is important. It gives us an insight into why he was chosen to be the friend of God. Notice that it does not say he was the most righteous man or most perfect man, but the most humble. Pride, particularly manifest in self-saving or self-sufficiency, is the greatest barrier to God's grace and a true relationship with him. Humility and submission is what God is looking for. The sin component is not the big issue.
- God's key revelation? Moses is my friend! This vision of God speaking face to face with his friend Moses shows God's heart for intimate friendship. This is an early clue that God's heart is not into religion but into relationship. The religion giver doesn't need to live in bondage to the religion. He is free to live as a friend. This is what we have open to us now that Jesus has come.
- Miriam's judgment is awful. Interesting how Scripture captures how everyone messes up. Miriam was a hero of sorts at the beginning of Exodus in saving Moses as a baby. Now she messes up and it is clearly captured in the story. It shows that everyone has issues.
- Hoshea name is changed to Joshua by Moses and this tips God's hand that he is going to do something special with Joshua. He is given a new name that means "God is savior." Definitely under Joshua the people will see this in the future. Maybe this is a part of why

Joshua believes and the others don't. His new name has reminded him that God has the power to do the impossible.

- Moses tells the spies to give a thorough report of the land. The picture of the grapes shows it is over the top in fruitfulness. This is no doubt something incredible for those who have been in the desert.
- Ten spies don't believe in God but believe the facts. Two spies, Caleb and Joshua, believe in God and disregard the facts. This is pretty much the experience of the human race. Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it." Again the way of following God looks mental. It looks like certain suicide. But with God in the mix, nothing is impossible so God expected the people to trust him and remember the past and how God had worked.
- Imagine how Moses feels when the people say, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt?" Serving as a leader for God can really be a thankless job. Having said that, choosing your own leader and path is the kind of self-saving action that goes with rejecting God's lordship and ultimately setting your own path to ruin. Submitting to God's lordship through his leaders, even though it seems completely crazy from all appearances, is actually the way to life and life abundant.
- Joshua and Caleb words are true words of faith. What is the key? "Do not be afraid, the Lord is with us."
- God wants to hit the reset button. He wants to wipe them all out and start over with Moses. After all the grief Moses has received from that generation you think he may have been tempted to say yes. But no, Moses once again shows the depth of his love for these people. Moses calls God back to God's own word and challenges God to keep his promise and display his character of mercy. Such boldness but here it shows that when you are a friend of God, God welcomes this kind of confident relating where you hold God to his word. "Slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion." Moses challenges God to show his strength in mercy!
- God forgives the people but gives the people what they want: to live a long life but just not in the Promised Land. It reminds us to be careful what we ask for. God may give us what we want. We need to ask God, "What do you want?" and to seek for him to lead us into his perfect will even when it seems crazy or frightening.
- Joshua and Caleb are the exceptions because of their faith and yet, they have to wait with the people. Their lives will be spared and they will one day lead the people in to claim God's provision. God is faithful to those who live by faith.
- The other ten spies are killed immediately by God. Here we see the judgment of God against those who lead people into unbelief.

- The people then try to do God's will in their own strength. Rather than submitting to God they now step out to try to do what they could only do with his help. Self willed rebellion and unbelief refuses to submit to God. They try to prove a point only to fail once again. We see again the outworking of a people who need to be changed from the inside out. They just can't get anything right.