

Exod 03-11-02b

In our further study of the Word of God this morning, we are going to be picking up in Exodus chapter 18, having looked at our scripture reading in Isaiah chapter 65, where we saw that God is much more interested in attitude than He is on origin. It doesn't matter where you come from, whether you're in or out of the nominal chosen people, it's much more important is what is going on in the heart. Are you looking for truth or not? Are you looking for forgiveness or not? Are you seeking or are you not? Jethro or Hobab or Ruel, any one of his names and titles that you want to use, is the father-in-law of Moses.

What is his nationality? Is he an Israelite? He is not. What is his lineage? What is his descent? He is a Midianite. What do we know about the Midianites? Turn with me back to Genesis chapter 25.

We sometimes tread very near the edge of what a homiletics professor or what a hermeneutics professor would consider acceptable, because there are things in the Word of God that are there to be seen and to be noted, but you can't always apply rules and say, yes, this is legitimate or no, this isn't. But I will tell you this, there is not a wasted word in Scripture. There is not an idle fact or an idle notation anywhere in the Word of God.

All of it is God-breathed. All of it is profitable for doctrine and reproof and correction and instruction and righteousness. So, there are people who have pushed Bible interpretation to exorbitant extremes and have gone clear off the deep end, getting mystical and building houses of cards and matchsticks and so on, going way off the deep end.

We don't want to do that, but I do want to draw something to your attention here in Genesis chapter 25. After Abraham and Sarah, after Abraham and Hagar, after the birth of Isaac, after the birth of Ishmael before him, in Genesis 25, Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah, and she bore him Zimron, Jokshon, Midan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuach. It goes on in verse 4 to say the sons of Midian were Ephah, Ephur, Hanach, Abida, and Eldahah.

All these were the children of Keturah. And when it says all these were the children of Keturah, and yet some of these are grandsons, you have Ephah, Ephur, Hanach, and so on, the idea seems to be suggested that these grandsons were given equal status as sons. They were treated by Abraham, they were given equal shares, in other words, when Abraham divided something to them.

He gave all that he had to Isaac, but Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had. While he was still living, he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east. Well, there are two facts that we're going to extract from this.

I could do a much more detailed study. But, this lady's name is Keturah, this wife, or concubine, as the scripture labels her. Sarah was Abraham's wife.

But he has these sons with Keturah. Keturah's name means smoke, or smoky fragrance. It has to do with the aroma of something on the fire.

It was used of the pleasurable smell of cooking meat. You know, sometimes Patty and I will be running, and we run in the evenings, and it's six o'clock-ish, and you go down the road, and all of a sudden you can tell someone's got the barbecue going. You can smell steak, or burgers, or chicken, or something on the grill.

Sometimes you're out in your backyard, and you suddenly get that very pleasant aroma coming of some good thing cooking. Well, Keturah is the word for that aroma, that smoky smell. It is used several places in the Word of God for the sweet-smelling aroma, or savor, that comes up from the altar of incense.

So this suggests and speaks of sacrifice. Her son with Abraham, one of several, and the one that is in view for us, who will have a descendant named Jethro, is Midian. Midian's name comes from a very well-known root to us.

It is the word *din*, which is the verb that means to judge. The noun from that in Hebrew is *Dan*. The tribe in Israel that has that name, of course, is familiar to us.

And you remember that if you are going to make a noun out of a verb, you can put an *M* in front of it. So if you get *Madin*, or *Midian*, as it comes to be pronounced, this means judgment. *Dan*, of course, is judge, but judgment, that which comes from the verbal act of judging, is judgment.

There is a modern town in Arabia called Medina, which is just the feminized form of this same word. Medina is from this very same root. It all has to do with judgment.

So here with Keturah and with Midian, we have these two ideas of sacrifice and judgment that are connected, that are suggested to us here in Genesis 25. And of course, it is no accident that the individual with whom Moses is linked when he leaves Egypt and spends 40 years away from his people, is in the land of Midian, and is in fact a priest of the Most High God, knows about Mount Sinai, knows about the God of Abraham, worships the God of Abraham, but his information is derived through a different branch of tradition. Now, he is not a Muslim.

He has not got some corrupted view and is worshiping Allah. This is the God of Abraham in the true sense. He is several generations descended from Abraham, but the information has not been twisted and corrupted as it is in Islam.

It has not been added to, it hasn't been modified and accreted with a lot of other information. But if you think about it, the only things that Israel knows about that the Midianites do not, are the things that were specifically revealed to Jacob. God made covenant promises to Jacob and to his 12 sons and their descendants that may not be known to the Midianites, because of course they were sent to the East with only the information they had in the time of Abraham.

Do they know about the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 17? Yes, they do. Do they know that through him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? Do they know about the God of Abraham? They do. But they are probably less familiar with the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob in the sense of his revealing himself to them in the last half of Genesis that we have and that the Israelites have.

And actually at the time of Moses, Genesis was not yet in existence and so the people of Israel only had the verbal traditions to go by. So, when we come to the time in Midian with Moses, Moses gets the chance to update Jethro and his family, his clan, with the information about the God of Abraham that was revealed through Isaac and Jacob. We have no indication that there was any supernatural revelation to Ephah or Ephor or Hanach or Abida or Eldahah.

There is no record that God had any direct dealings with these collateral branches. So, this information would have come only through Moses to Jethro. But it seems apparent that Moses, who is the author, the human author of Genesis, would have passed along whatever information he possessed during his 40 year sojourn with his father-in-law in Midian and could have brought him up to date as far as the end of Genesis goes.

So now, in Exodus chapter 18, when Jethro reappears, there has been yet another fresh revelation and exposure to the God of Abraham. He has now revealed himself by his personal name, Yahweh. He has interacted in a very explicit and visible way with the descendants of Jacob in Egypt.

And this is information that would only come second and third hand, perhaps through caravans or passers-by who would travel through Egypt or on the borders of Egypt and then pass through Midian. So, there is rumor and there is speculation and there has been these great disasters, but it wouldn't necessarily be linked to the God of Jacob, to the God of Israel. And so, when Jethro brings Zipporah and the two sons, of course, she did not accompany Moses on into Egypt.

Evidently, she was sent back to her father at the border after the circumcision episode. So, this is all new. And so, Moses updates Jethro in verse 8 of chapter 18.

Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, for Jacob's descendants' sake, all the hardship that had come upon them on the way and how the Lord had delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the good which the Lord had done for Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And you get the idea that Jethro is basically familiar with the contents of Genesis, and now he is getting the first 16 or 17 chapters of Exodus.

So, he is getting caught up to the very point that the Israelites themselves are. And he rejoices. He is one who sought the Lord in a far land, didn't have as much information, didn't know him by his name, but the Lord was found by him.

And he, in fact, is a priest and leads worship in his clan directed toward the God of Abraham. And so, he says in verse 10, Blessed be the Lord who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods, for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, he was above them.

This, of course, goes back to what we observed in the ten plagues and how the various supposed deities of Egypt, the gods of the Nile, the gods of the sources of the Nile, the gods that were supposed to control the weather and the sky and the soil and the crops and the waters of the Nile and all the rest of this, the gods of life, were all put to shame because when the God of Israel spoke, they were powerless. They couldn't preserve the water. They couldn't bring light in the darkness.

They couldn't control the frogs or the flies or the lice. They couldn't protect their livestock in the hail and culminating in the death of the firstborn, where Pharaoh was supposedly the firstborn of the great god of Egypt and yet his own firstborn was slain. This just basically put the lie to all of the legendary gods of Egypt and so Jethro acknowledges this.

He says, in that they behaved proudly, he was above them. Then in verse 12, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, now notice, chapter 18, verse 1, Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law. Verse 2, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law.

Verse 5, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law. Verse 7, Moses went out to meet his father-in-law. Verse 8, Moses told his father-in-law.

Verse 12, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law. Verse 14, how many different times do we need to be told? Verse 15, Moses' father-in-law. Verse 17, Moses' father-in-law.

Time and time and time and time again, it doesn't just say Jethro. It states his relation to Moses. Why is this? I give you a moment to speculate.

Why does Scripture make such a big deal? Why doesn't it just say Jethro? I would suggest to you that this emphasizes and underscores, and then underscores again and again, the fact that Moses is a link. He is a bridge between the people of Israel and this clan of Midianites. Specifically, Jethro and his clan, and ultimately his descendants.

We've seen the Kenites show up in our first Samuel study, haven't we? When Saul gets ready to attack the Amalekites, he preserves the Kenites because they are descendants of Hobab, of Jethro. How does this link get formed? What is its basis and its substance? Moses is the link, and over and over again, Jethro is identified as the father-in-law of Moses. He is brought into familial relationship with Israel through Moses.

Moses is the link. There is a picture here of the bringing of someone outside and far away near. You go back to the significance of those names, talking about sacrifice and of judgment.

The two elements in the visit of Jethro to Israel are what? Look at verse 12. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and other sacrifices to offer to God. The first one, burnt offering, is Olah.

This is the whole burnt offering. The entire animal is prepared and sacrificed and goes up in flames before God. The second one, the sacrifices, these are the offerings that are portions are offered to God and portions are shared in a worship meal by the worshippers.

When Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God, you have this uniting in worship and in a fellowship meal of these who are not Israelites but have found God just like we saw in Isaiah chapter 65. Judgment and sacrifice. Where is the judgment portion in this chapter? You go to verse 14 and following.

Moses sets up to judge the people and explain to them the laws that God has provided and Jethro says, let me help you out with this. I can show you a better way. Why don't you delegate? And these elders that we had the meal with, why don't you get some of those guys to help you? And he sets this system up of judgment.

Midian. That's what Midianites do best. That's what they're named for, is knowing how to render judgment.

And so there is something that is added. There is something that is gained in the fellowship of these two distantly related groups. But the Midianites are not Israelites.

And notice they do not remain in Israel. They don't become proselytes. Jethro doesn't join himself to Israel.

He returns to his own land. Well, what are we to make of all of this? You say, well, that's real interesting, but I ask myself the inevitable question, so what? Well, you look at the sweep of human history and you look at the incursion of the church age after 1,400 years of history for the nation of Israel and you see that the Gentiles, in our Acts study, we've seen the ministry of Philip up in Samaria. We've seen Philip now with the Ethiopian treasury department chairman for Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, and the coming to worship and coming to fellowship of people who are not Israelites, who are not in the traditional group that's supposed to be the stewards of the ministry.

And why does this take place? Why does the church age come at all? Do you think if the nation of Israel had accepted and recognized the Lord Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of their Messianic prophecies and had listened to His message and had said, truly this is the Son of God, the way the Roman centurion did at the cross, that we would have had a church age? Well, it's, of course, speculation. I don't know what would have happened, but it would have certainly been different. Working out in God's plan, the reason we are here and the reason we enjoy the blessings of the firstborn, even though we are the younger brothers, so to speak, is because the older brother rejected his inheritance.

Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage and Jacob received it. The church is Jacob to Israel's Esau. Israel should have received, should have obtained, and did not.

Why? Why? For all of those reasons we saw in Isaiah 65, all day long I have held up my hands to a disobedient and a stiff-necked people. People who are absorbed in their own business who say, I am holier than thou. People who have become a stench in God's nostrils even though they had the first shot, they had the first crack at it.

And it is by way of contrast that these who reject are put to shame by those who didn't even have the advantages, who didn't start out. A similar situation today would be someone, you know, it's almost legendary how contrary-wise a pastor's children can be. Not in my household, but traditionally and at large, PKs, as they call them, are oftentimes the worst troublemakers you can have.

And then here's some other individual who grows up in a completely Christless and godless household and comes to faith and gets interested in the Word of God. And you say, how can this person who grew up hearing the things of God not care and not get in the daily walk of faith and obedience? And here's someone that had no initial exposure and is anxious and ready and is pressing toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And it puts the other ones to shame, doesn't it? You should know better.

You're right there at the source of the springs of living water. Here's someone that had to travel across a desert to even get to the edge of the creek. And this person is a lot more appreciative and a lot more interested and a lot more motivated than someone who knows.

And we have to watch out for this because this is all a part of that holier-than-thou attitude. We can assume that because we've studied for a long time or we can assume because we have known about God and have had a church upbringing or whatever, that we are close and near and just sort of glowing in the dark with spiritual greatness and can actually be looking down our nose at others and then find that the situation is opposite of what we thought it was. This is what happened to Israel.

Israel said, we are sons of Abraham. What are you doing talking to these pagans and eating with sinners? They accused Jesus of messing up because He was talking to prostitutes and tax collectors and Gentiles. And then they tried to nitpick that He wasn't as righteous as they because He might heal on the Sabbath or He might let His disciples pull a piece of grain on the Sabbath.

And what they did not understand in their holier-than-thou attitude is that there were those who were coming from far away that recognized who Jesus was and were availing themselves of God's grace while they themselves were missing out. This chapter, chapter 18, is set here for a reason. It's set here for a reason.

What is happening in Exodus chapter 19? In fact, for the next 15 chapters, what's going to be

happening? For 15 chapters now, God is going to speak for Mount Sinai. He's going to give His Word to His people. But you have this very important chapter that has been moved up in sequence and put before that block of instruction, that giving of the Law to Moses on Sinai.

And it's got Jethro, who hasn't been to Mount Sinai, who isn't a part of the people of God, didn't go through the bondage, doesn't have all of the advantages and the information that's available to the children of Israel. And yet, all he has to do is be told once. And he is ready to worship.

He is ready to sacrifice. He is ready to acknowledge the God of Israel. These people that pick up manna every morning, that crossed the Red Sea, that got water from the rock, are so quick to disbelieve, to lose faith, to get distracted.

Before these 15 chapters are over, there's going to be a golden calf constructed. Who constructs the golden calf? Jethro? Aaron. Aaron, the brother of Moses.

Aaron, who sits and eats this fellowship meal with Jethro and the elders of Israel. Aaron and the elders of Israel are going to build for the people the golden calf. And this chapter, this episode, these two ideas of sacrifice and judgment are put here to draw our attention to our own responsibility in these areas.

It doesn't matter if we grew up in the church or if we came from far away. It doesn't matter if we have been paying attention for a long time or only recently got interested in the things of God. God doesn't care what your background is.

God doesn't care what your heritage is. He doesn't care what your pedigree is. He doesn't care what you did yesterday.

Today is the day of reckoning. Today is the day of evaluation. No one can rest on their laurels.

Remember we talked about forgiveness of sin? We say, well, you know, I may have messed up in a big way, but I confessed it. I did my first John 1, 9 thing, and so it's all in the past. It's washed away.

I don't have to worry about it anymore. God is concerned with today. And if we today follow a pattern, God will judge us for the pattern.

If we disregard what has been revealed to us today, God will reckon with us today. We may not see the effects. We may think we're getting away with a lot.

We may fool ourselves into thinking that we are actually blessed when we're not, that we're actually prospering under God's gracious hand when we're not. We may be prospering in the ways of the world and getting by on our own devices and thinking that we're getting over and that we've accomplished something. Look at this Scripture.

Look at these two things. Keturah and Midian. Jethro and Aaron.

Sacrifice and judgment. Those are the two things that we have to take into account each and every day. Now, tomorrow is Monday, and the day after that is Tuesday.

And at some point, suppose that what we have studied this morning comes to your mind. You're in the middle of doing something. Tomorrow, and you say, what was it we learned about yesterday in church? Oh, yeah.

Keturah and Midian. Sacrifice and judgment. Then we can ask ourselves this question.

What do those two things represent? Sacrifice. Where do I stand before God? Am I in a worship mode? Am I in an acknowledgement mode? Am I saying what Jethro said? Blessed be the God of Israel. Blessed be the Lord for His deliverance.

I know that He is greater than all the gods. He is greater than all the strategies. He is greater than all the philosophies, all of the get-by and get-over and get-through mechanisms of life.

That's the sacrifice aspect. What is the judgment aspect? What am I now doing? Am I doing what I do to please the Lord? Am I doing what I do in the light of His plan? Am I enabled and empowered by His Spirit and His Word? Or am I just bringing my old baggage forward like Simon the magician? Am I just operating the way I've seen things done in the past? Why did the Israelites, why are they going to build this golden calf? We haven't gotten there yet, but you already know the answer to this question. Why do they build a golden calf? Where does that idea come from? They're going to get Aaron to build it, and then they're going to bow down to it and say, this is the God that brought us out of Egypt.

Where do they get this idea? They just got through building it, and now they say this is what got us out of Egypt. Well, it's from looking at worship in Egypt for 215 years. The Egyptians have statues.

The Egyptians have gilded objects of worship that represent their invisible deities. And they say, we need something concrete. I can't go on this invisible God business.

I need something I can look at and touch and see. I can't go on into the future, into the unknown, and not know and not see what's going to happen. I can't be Philip, and when God says, go to the desert, just go.

I need the rest of the plan here. I need to have prior approval on this script. That's why they build the golden calf.

That's why you and I fail day by day when we fail. It's because we want something concrete. I want some steps.

I want some answers. I want some information right now. I can't just seek and not know the name of something.

I've got to know the name. I've got to know the answer. I've got to see the direction.

You've got to give me the plan and let me see it and approve it before I'm going to walk down that road. And the whole idea of walking by faith and not by sight is foreign to us, and we don't like it. Jethro did not see what happened in Egypt.

Jethro did not see the Red Sea part. He didn't see the ten plagues. But when Moses tells him about it, he says he believes it.

He acknowledges the God of Israel. He takes it all on faith, and he offers sacrifices. And what's very interesting to me is, probably the most interesting thing in chapter 18, is this.

Who leads the worship here? Jethro does. Aaron has already been commissioned as a priest. We saw this last time, because Jethro comes to them while they are camped at the mountain, which this story doesn't tell us about until 19.1. And he tells Moses how to execute judgment on the statutes and ordinances of God, which have not been delivered until after chapter 19 and 20 and 21 and all the way down to 34.

This is after the giving of the law. This is after the designation and commissioning of the Levites, and Aaron and his sons in particular as priests. And yet, who has the superior priesthood? The senior priest is always the one who officiates.

Abraham was the priest of his clan until he met Melchizedek. And Melchizedek outranks him. And so you have Melchizedek bringing bread and wine and sharing the fellowship meal and offering the sacrifices before God.

Here, Jethro has the superior priesthood, even to the Levitical priesthood, the priesthood of the Levites. He is the one that officiates. It says here that when it says he took a burnt offering and sacrifices to offer to God, it doesn't mean he went and got them and sort of operated and everybody else watched.

It means he received them. The Levites and these others brought the sacrifices to him and he is the one that offered them. This is the word that is used for officiating over sacrifices.

They acknowledged his priesthood as above their own, which is quite interesting. We have been, in this age, made priests and kings with Christ, through Christ, because we are in Christ. We share his sonship.

We share his status as an heir. We share his priesthood. We share his choosing, his election.

We have been raised above the older brother, Israel. Our priesthood is of the Melchizedekian order, which is above both the Levitical and the priesthood of Jethro, the family priesthood, because, remember, the sons of Abraham are in his loins when he does obeisance to Melchizedek, and that includes Midian. Our priesthood is of the highest order.

What does that mean? When you think about what we are looking at here in 18, those two ideas of sacrifice and judgment that fill this chapter, that are reflected in those names, Keturah and

Midian, that are spelled out for us and pictured here, ought to be a part of our daily life. That's our two areas of responsibility. Worship, our fellowship with God, walking before Him, acknowledging Him in what we do, and then judgment.

If we judge ourselves, we will not be judged. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse. If we look at ourselves and ensure that we are not bearing a grudge, that we are forgiving others, that we are letting go, and if there is any vengeance, if there is any retribution, we leave it in God's hands.

We maintain that status of forgiveness and cleansing. We walk in the light. We are not just standing in the light, we walk in the light of 1 John 1.7. Worship and judgment.

So, once this idea of delegation is explained to Moses, he heeded the voice of his father-in-law, you have that relationship again in verse 24, and did all that he had said. Moses defers. He acknowledges Jethro.

He never corrects Jethro. He never second guesses Jethro. He never supersedes or pulls rank on Jethro.

In every instance, his father-in-law is the superior in this chapter, which is quite striking when you consider who Moses is and who Aaron is and what's going on here in Israel. So now in chapter 19, in the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day they came to the wilderness of Sinai, now we're backing up because Moses, under the direction of God's Holy Spirit, is going to give us this block of instruction, this set of teachings that constitute the law of Moses, all in a chunk. We're going to see Moses go up and down the mountain several times.

But basically, from this point forward, we break off in terms of narrative and story of Israel moving through the wilderness, and we stop and we get these instructions from God. This is going to change the nature of our study a little bit because as soon as we see the details of delivery of this information in chapter 19, we're going to begin to get the content of that information itself. And it is going to be quite an interesting excursion beginning in verse 1 of chapter 20 where we start out with the Ten Commandments and then move forward into the various aspects of the law of Moses.

We're going to branch out from here and go to Numbers and Deuteronomy as they impinge. And by the time we get to chapter 34 and get ready to resume Israel's journeyings, we will have covered a significant portion and we should have a very good understanding. And this is the main thing.

When you think about the law of Moses, what do you think about? Sacrifices, regulations. This is what Israel had to do. We don't have to do anymore and we don't think too much about it.

Each and every one of the statements that God is going to make to Israel has been preserved and handed to you and to me to learn from. The New Testament tells us all these things were

written for our instruction. We are at the culmination of the ages.

And you think, well, I'm not an Israelite. I don't have to offer sacrifices. Why should I care? I'm just glad to be out from under that whole weight of law.

Well, the law was a schoolmaster, a tutor, a teacher to bring us to Christ. And it is in each and every one of these principles for Israel that we find the Lord Jesus Christ revealed. Christianity is often described as a relationship rather than a religion.

If you're in a relationship, everybody likes relationship, especially when it's with the opposite gender. I say everybody. Every normal person likes relationship with the opposite gender.

And it is a matter of knowing the person, isn't it? Genuine relationship is based on knowledge and intimacy. And what's exciting about what's coming up for us is we're going to come to know the Lord Jesus in a way that you will never know Him from the New Testament because this is a window, this is a perspective and an insight that we gain only through the Old Testament. This is what God revealed.

This is what Jesus explained on the road to Emmaus. This is what Philip explains to the eunuch in the chariot on the road down to Gaza. Beginning with the law, Jesus was able to explain all about Himself.

Beginning in Isaiah and going through the rest of the Scriptures, Philip was able to explain and preach Christ. And that's what we're going to see in these upcoming pages. So I invite you to read ahead and see what is coming up.

Formulate your questions. And hopefully as we journey through this together, we will find some great treasures and great truths from God's Word. But we need to close this morning at this point in a word of prayer.

Father, thank You for allowing us to remain and to live in this time and in this place with so much available to us from Your Word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will minister these truths to our souls and impress them on our hearts so that we will live in a way that is pleasing in Your sight. We will grow in grace and knowledge of our Savior Jesus Christ.

We ask it in His name. Amen.