*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 12 - 17

Moses (part one)

**Monday, June 12 Exodus 3:1 – 4:17**

*“Who am I, that I should . . .”*

 The main theme addressed in this passage is God’s call to Moses and Moses’ reluctance to answer that call. His reluctance seems to be a cross between true humility, an appreciation for the difficulties that will confront him in his role, and simple stubbornness. One would expect Israel’s deliverer to have more resolve and less hesitation. Nevertheless, such a human presentation of Moses is one that we can readily understand today.

 Moses’ questions, which are really challenges to God, serve to draw out more concretely the nature of God’s continued presence with Moses and the manner in which his power will be displayed to Egypt. God answers each of Moses’ questions patiently and does not become angry with Moses until his fifth challenge. Moses’ concerns seem legitimate (at least in his mind), but the Lord is patient with that, and those concerns prove a vehicle for God to reveal himself. When Moses simply puts his foot down and says, “No,” God does become angry with him. Not because he dared confront the Lord, but because he refused to trust God’s answers.

*When you call me to a task, Lord, I will trust you to provide all I need. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 13 Exodus 5:1 – 6:13**

*“Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?”*

 Moses returns to Egypt and is now ready to carry out the task that God has specifically chosen for him. We expect a quick, cataclysmic end to Pharaoh’s resistance. But this is not what happens. In this section things get worse before they get better. Is this supposed to happen? Did not God say that he would be with Moses and teach him what to say (4:12)? To the detached observer, it looks as if the ramblings of an old man and his brother before Pharaoh are not only ineffective, but counterproductive.

 Perhaps nowhere is Pharaoh’s hardness of heart demonstrated more clearly than in the first words he utters in the Exodus narrative: “Who is the Lord?” Pharaoh’s question is disrespectful and sarcastic, positioning himself to do battle with this so-called “God of Israel.” In time, of course, Pharaoh will have this question answered for him more pointedly than he ever imagined. Pharaoh does not keep the Israelites enslaved because he does not know who God is, but because he does not *know* God, meaning he does not accord him any respect.

*I know you, Lord, and I will obey you and do what you ask of me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, June 14 Exodus 10:1-29**

*“The plagues”*

 The plagues against Egypt are not just a display of God flexing his muscles. They are the unleashing of God’s creative forces against the enemies of God’s people (and therefore of God himself). In the abstract one can imagine God using a variety of other means to bring Egypt to its knees; ways that have biblical precedent elsewhere. He could have sent an angel dressed in armor and girded with a sword. He could have used a foreign army as his instrument of judgment. But this was not the tactic he takes. He chooses, rather, to fight with weapons that no one but he has at his disposal and that only he can command. After all, what defense is there against the forces of creation itself?

 There is little *literal* contemporary significance in the plagues recounted in Exodus. We are not Israelites, and we are not oppressed by Egypt. We must resist the temptation to “apply” the plague narrative by ascribing to God’s judgment any natural catastrophe or other similar disasters that happen along. God is free to act however he chooses, whenever he chooses.

*Evil against you and your people, Lord, cannot withstand your judgment. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 12 - 17

Moses (part one)

**Thursday, June 15 Exodus 12:1-23**

*“The Passover”*

  These verses go into considerable detail concerning the Passover meal and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the week-long festival that follows Passover after the Israelites have settled in the Promised Land. The purpose of these celebrations is clearly for the benefit of those generations who did not participate in the Exodus itself. God’s acts on behalf of his people are never meant to be anything less than acts that transcend time and space. There is more to the Exodus than simply delivering slaves from Egypt. God’s field of vision is far and broad.

 At the prescribed time, each household is to take a one-year-old male lamb, without defect. If any house is too small to consume an entire lamb, neighbors are to share. Moreover, the blood of the young lamb is to be drained into a basin, a hyssop branch is to be dipped into it, and the tops and sides of the doorframes are to be painted with the blood. This will be a sign that the occupants of that house are placing themselves under God’s protection and so will be spared by the angel of death passing over their house.

*The blood of Jesus Christ on the cross, Lord, spares me from eternal death. Amen.*

**Friday, June 16 Exodus 13:17 – 14:31**

*“The Red Sea”*

 Finally, the Israelites leave Egypt. As God has been demanding all along through his servant Moses, Pharaoh has let the people go. But, guided by God, they seem to march right into trouble at the Red Sea, with no escape route. This entices Pharaoh to follow the Israelites, bringing him and God into one final battle, one that will show Pharaoh once and for all who is truly God. From this point on, Egypt will never again dominate Israel as it once had.

 This turn of events comes as a great shock to the Israelites. It is clear to them that Pharaoh’s pursuit will end badly for them, and they become terrified and cry out to the Lord. In response, Moses proclaims that the Lord will fight for them; they need only to be still – that is, stop focusing on the Egyptians and complaining about them to God; instead, focus on God, be still, and watch what he will do. The parting of the Red Sea and the destruction of the Egyptian army becomes yet another way, as we saw with the plagues, in which God employs the forces of creation on behalf of his people and against Pharaoh.

*Because I am yours, Lord, you fight for me against evil. Amen.*

**Saturday, June 17 Exodus 18:1-27**

*“Jethro, the priest of Midian”*

 Ever since God chose a particular people through whom to work his grand plan of salvation, the question has come up, “What about the other nations?” This question begins to be answered directly in Exodus 18 with Jethro’s acknowledgement of the God of Moses as “greater than all other gods.” Thus, Jethro and Midian serves as a model of how nations ought to respond to Israel’s God, in contrast to Pharaoh and Egypt who rejected the God of Moses.

 The second half of this chapter is not just a story of Moses receiving some helpful advice from an in-law. The bigger question is, “What does Moses need help doing?” The people want to know what must be done in order to settle their disputes; they are coming to seek God’s will. Apparently, they have no clear way of knowing what that is. So, for the time being, it is up to Moses to tell them, and this proves too taxing for him. Jethro suggests increasing the number of judges. This is fine for now, but within a few chapters another solution will be presented. God will give the people his commandments, the written publication of his will.

*May all the nations, Lord, acknowledge you as God alone. Amen.*