

A Millennial Picture.

Exodus 18

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This chapter is the termination of the first part of the book of Exodus. Up to this point, the dealings of God with Israel had been in sovereign grace. When He first looked upon them in Egypt, there was no cause in them to draw out His favour. They seem to have sunk almost to the level of the Egyptians around them and to have forgotten God's name. But Jehovah remembered His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and so in the grace of His heart came in and gave them a great salvation. Egypt was judged and its power broken. Israel was brought forth by divine power, after having been screened from the holy judgment of God by the blood of the Paschal lamb. Law had not yet been spoken of; all was grace. This being so, all their murmuring was borne with, and their needs supplied. The tree was shown that could sweeten the bitter waters of Marah (Ex. 15), bread from heaven and quails were granted (Ex. 16), and water was made to gush forth from the flinty rock (Ex. 17). Whatever their perverseness, we read nothing of the plague in the camp, nor of burning fiery serpents.

Chapter 18 closes this section, and then we note a change. Grace not having been appreciated, terms of law were proposed, and eagerly accepted by the people, not knowing their own hearts nor the God with Whom they had to do. It was necessary that the question of righteousness should be raised with man ere the Deliverer was sent forth; this was the suited opportunity. Israel's after history shows sadly what man is when tested by law, even though possessing every advantage and favour.

It is fitting that the section of grace should close with a millennial picture. Grace ends ever in glory, either in heaven or on earth. Moses stands forth here as a type of Christ; first sentenced to death by the power of the world; then given back from death as it were; afterwards being used of God to deliver Israel from all their foes. He is now seen as their ruler establishing order and government among them. The people had been borne on eagles' wings and brought to God; Moses now takes his place in their midst as their divinely appointed leader and king. Remarkable foreshadowing of the One, Who has more honour than Moses, our Lord Jesus! This will He do for Israel in the end of the age. Once more they will stand before God on the ground of grace, all human attempts at righteousness being flung aside by them for ever.

Zipporah was there also, a well known type of the church of God. Moses was a husband by blood to her, herself being witness (Ex. 4: 24-26). She became united to the deliverer during the period of his estrangement from Israel, through their rejection of him. While Israel's deliverance was proceeding, she was sent home, but now reappears to share in the general joy. This is what is happening, and will yet happen as regards the church of God. Christ is at the moment in the distant land as far as Israel is concerned, but souls are being united to Him on high by the Holy Ghost to be His body now and His bride in the approaching day. Israel's deliverance will be wrought out during the trouble unparalleled of the closing days (Dan. 12: 1); but then the heavenly bride will be safely sheltered in the Father's house, to appear with the Lord when He comes to inaugurate His season of earthly glory.

Eliezer is brought in at this point in a very striking way. Gershom's name shows that Moses' heart was yearning after Israel while separate) from them, in contrast with the names of Joseph's sons, which show the satisfaction and joy his heart found in other relationships while apart from his brethren after the flesh (Gen. 41). Eliezer is introduced no less suitably in Ex. 18: 4, "and the name of the other was

Eliezer; for the God of my father was my help and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." Most seasonable after the great deliverance just experienced, not only by himself but by the whole people of God.

Jethro too has his place. "He heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel His people, and that Jehovah had brought Israel out of Egypt" (ver. 1). "And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which Jehovah had done to Israel whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians" (ver. 9). He looked on unselfishly and praised Jehovah for all His goodness, owning Him to be greater than all gods. Thus will it be in the day of Christ's glory. All parties will fall readily into the places divinely assigned to them, none envying the other his portion of joy. The dead and risen Deliverer will have His heavenly bride in closest association with Himself on His throne; the tribes of Israel will be at rest from all their oppressors, and be in the enjoyment of the grace of God, which alone can bless a ruined people; and the Gentiles will praise God's ways of grace and power, and themselves enjoy it in connection with the people of God's choice. Haste the happy time! W. W. F.