

Introduction

1. Our passage this morning mainly focuses on Jethro, Moses's father-in-law
2. We don't know much about him because he's only mentioned a few times in the Bible:
 - a. He was a Midianite which made him a descendant of Abraham—the Midianites were the descendants of one of Abraham's six sons, Midian, he fathered through Keturah, the wife he married after Sarah died
 - b. He was a shepherd and became Moses's father-in-law back in Exodus 2 when Moses married one of his seven daughters after rescuing them from some shepherds who tried to prevent them from watering their flocks
 - c. In addition to being a shepherd, he is referred to multiple times as “**priest of Midian**”, including in our passage today
3. His role as priest is intriguing because the Bible doesn't state whether He was a priest to Yahweh or a polytheistic priest:
 - a. Monotheistic Remnant View:
 - 1) This view holds that as a descendant of Abraham's son Midian, Jethro would have retained some knowledge of the true God and would have therefore been a priest to Him
 - 2) Proponents of this view include Warren Wiersbe, Hebrew scholar Walter Kaiser, and you'll even find it in the ESV study Bible
 - 3) One of the challenges to this view is that throughout the Bible the Midianites are shown to be polytheistic, worshipping many of the Canaanite gods like Baal and Ashtoreth
 - b. Polytheistic View:
 - 1) This view holds that Jethro was likely a polytheistic priest, in part because the Midianites were polytheistic and he is referred to multiple times simply as “priest of Midian” and never once as a priest of God
 - 2) I believe this view also makes the most sense out of Jethro's declaration that “**Yahweh is greater than all the gods**” that we'll examine later in today's passage
 - 3) Proponents of this view include J. Vernon McGee and John MacArthur
4. The view one holds regarding Jethro—whether he was a priest to God or a polytheistic priest—determines how one approaches today's passage:
 - a. Those who believe Jethro was a priest to God interpret the passage as Jethro deepening His faith in Yahweh as a result of seeing what He did for Moses and Israel

- b. Those who believe Jethro was a polytheistic priest interpret the passage as Jethro's conversion from worshipping and serving many gods to worshipping and serving the One True God, Yahweh
- c. Because I lean toward the polytheistic view and believe Jethro likely worshipped many gods like the Midianites around him, I believe what we see in the passage today is the incredible story of his conversion after hearing what Yahweh did for Moses and Israel

A. Jethro heard what Yahweh had done for Moses and Israel (READ 18:1-8)

1. The first thing we see is that Jethro got wind of what Yahweh had done for Moses and Israel (1):
 - a. It's not all that remarkable that Jethro heard about what happened in Egypt:
 - 1) Midian was only about 250-300 miles from the eastern border of Egypt and there were trade routes with travelers between Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula
 - 2) Certainly, the kind of devastation Egypt faced throughout the 10 plagues would have been talked about and news would have spread throughout the region
 - 3) In addition, at this time Moses and Israel were practically at Jethro's doorstep because they were camped in the wilderness of Midian
 - b. What is remarkable, however, is the nature of the news:
 - 1) Notice that Jethro didn't just hear about what happened in Egypt as if it was some kind of natural phenomenon, but **"heard of all that God had done for Moses and Israel..."**
 - 2) In addition, along with the news came the recognition that Israel was **"His people"**
 - 3) The news even specified that it was **"Yahweh"** who **"had brought Israel out of Egypt"**
 - 4) All of this is significant because Egypt, Midia, and all the surrounding nations were polytheistic and but when news about what happened in Egypt spread to other regions it was reported as the hand of Yahweh and it was made clear that Israel was His people
 - 5) This was precisely one of God's goals for the plagues for he told Pharoah, **"But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth"** (Exodus 9:16)
2. When Jethro heard what Yahweh had done, he set out to meet Moses in the wilderness presumably to return his wife and sons to him (18:2-6):
 - a. While the event is not recorded in the Bible, at some point Moses apparently sent his wife and two sons back to Midian to live with Jethro:

- 1) Some claim that Moses had divorced his wife because the phrase “sent away” sometimes refers to divorce in the OT, but there’s no indication anywhere else in the Bible that Moses divorced his wife
 - 2) Rather, the primary meaning of the word (and most often usage) is that of sending someone or something away
 - 3) Moses likely sent his wife and sons back home to Jethro in order to protect them as he and Aaron confronted Pharaoh
- b. His purpose in meeting Moses in the wilderness appears to have been to return his wife and children to him:
- 1) We are told three times in the passage that Jethro took Moses’ wife and children with him, including when he sent word to Moses that he was coming to visit him with his wife and children (SEE 2, 5, 6)
 - 2) Later in 18:27 we learn that Jethro returned to his home by himself
3. When Jethro and Moses finally meet, it results in Moses recounting to Jethro all the miraculous things Yahweh had done for the sake of Israel (18:7-8):
- a. Their meeting began with the expected pleasantries—Moses bowing down and greeting his father-in-law with a kiss and asking each other about their wellbeing
 - b. However, after entering the tent Moses began to tell Jethro of all the miraculous things Yahweh had done over the previous months:
 - 1) It included everything Yahweh had done to Pharaoh and Egypt on behalf of Israel—how Yahweh had judged Egypt and their gods in the 10 plagues while protecting Israel
 - 2) It included all the hardships they had faced on the journey out of Egypt and how Yahweh delivered them through them all:
 - a) How Yahweh delivered them at the Red Sea
 - b) How Yahweh turned bitter, undrinkable water in the Wilderness of Shur, and then led them to a beautiful, lush oasis with 12 wells and 70 date palm trees
 - c) How Yahweh provided them with manna and quail when they were famished and hungry in the Wilderness of Sin
 - d) How Yahweh provided them with water from a rock at Massah and Meribah

B. Jethro responded to what Yahweh had done in four ways (18:9-12)
--

1. Jethro rejoiced over Yahweh’s goodness to Moses and Israel (READ 18:9):
 - a. Prior to the Exodus, the Israelites were simply known in the ANE as the Habirus or Apirus, a marginalized and enslaved people group living in Egypt
 - b. So, aside from his relationship with Moses, this likely would have been the extent of Jethro’s familiarity with them

- c. Yet, when he heard all that Yahweh did to deliver them from the hand of the Egyptians he **“rejoiced over all the goodness which Yahweh had done to Israel, in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians”**
 - 1) The Hebrew word translated **“rejoice”** here is rare, only occurring three times in the OT but it appears to refer to being exceedingly glad
 - 2) The translators of the LXX translated it here using a Greek word meaning to be amazed
- 2. Jethro blessed Yahweh for His deliverance of Israel (READ 18:10):
 - a. Jethro’s rejoicing led to praising Yahweh for delivering Israel from the Egyptians
 - b. To bless the Lord means to speak well of Him
 - c. One of the things we see throughout the Bible is that praising God always has substance—He is either praised for Who He is or what he’s done, and that’s exactly what we see here with Jethro’s praise
- 3. Jethro confessed Yahweh’s greatness above all other gods (READ 18:11):
 - a. This is one of the reasons why I believe Jethro was a polytheistic priest prior to this encounter with Moses
 - b. There are many passages in Scripture that exalt Yahweh’s greatness over all other gods but nearly all of them are made by someone who already knows Him:
 - 1) Moses (Exodus 15:11; 18:11)
 - 2) David in the Psalms (Psalm 95:3; 97:9; 135:5)
 - 3) Solomon (2 Chronicles 2:5)
 - c. However, Jethro’s declaration is different in that he said, **“NOW I KNOW that Yahweh is greater than all the gods”** suggesting that hearing Moses tell story after story of what God had done convinced him that Yahweh was greater than all other gods
 - d. In fact, he went on to say, **“indeed it was proven when they [the Egyptians] dealt proudly against the people”**—meaning it was proven when Yahweh humiliated the gods of Egypt through the ten plagues
- 4. Jethro worshipped Yahweh (READ 18:12):
 - a. The culmination of Jethro’s rejoicing, praise, and confession was worship
 - b. He made a burnt offering and sacrifices (plural) to God and was joined by Aaron and all the elders of Israel as they ate the offering and sacrifices before God
 - c. It’s important to note that Jethro was the one who initiated and performed the burnt offering and sacrifices—he led them in worship!

Conclusion & Takeaways

- 1. I believe what we’ve witnessed in this passage is the conversion of Jethro from someone who served many gods to someone who served the One True God

2. His conversion began when he first heard the reports about all that Yahweh had done, but it took Moses telling him the incredible stories of Yahweh's miraculous works that led to Jethro rejoicing, praising Yahweh, confessing His greatness above all other gods, and ultimately worshipping Him
3. This reminded me of something Paul wrote in Romans 10:14 (READ):
 - a. Jethro came to worship Yahweh because he believed, and he believed because he heard, and he heard because Moses told him about all the amazing things Yahweh did for him and Israel
 - b. The world around us needs to believe in Jesus in order to be saved, and they can only believe if they hear, but they can't hear unless we tell them
4. Our greatest purpose in this life is to tell the world the incredible story of what God has done for us in Christ—just like Moses told Jethro all that Yahweh had done for him and Israel