

WHAT AWAITS YOU AT THE END OF LIFE'S ROAD?

18 Now Jethro, the priest of Midian and Moses' father-in-law, heard about all that God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, how Jehovah had brought Israel out of Egypt. ²After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, Jethro, his father-in-law, took care of her ³and her two sons. One son was named Gershom, because Moses had said, "I have become a sojourner in a foreign land." ⁴The name of the other was Eliezer, because he had said, "My father's God was my helper; he delivered me from Pharaoh's sword." ⁵Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, together with Moses' sons and his wife, came to him in the wilderness, where he was camped by the mountain of God. ⁶He had sent word to Moses, saying, "I, Jethro, your father-in-law, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons."

⁷So Moses went out to greet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They inquired of each other's welfare and then went into the tent. ⁸Moses told his father-in-law all that Jehovah had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had encountered along the way and how Jehovah had delivered them. ⁹Jethro rejoiced over all the good that Jehovah had done for Israel in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians. ¹⁰Jethro said, "Blessed be Jehovah, who has delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh, who has delivered the people from the hand of the Egyptians! ¹¹Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all other gods; indeed, this has been proven by his response to those who treated Israel arrogantly." ¹²Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God. (Ex. 18:1-12)

Introduction

Fog has followed the vacationers for days, enveloping their little rented Opel as they travel along the narrow, winding roads of southern Germany's Bodensee. The mist is thick and depressing, and they find it hard to muster much enthusiasm for the trip to Bavaria. They ride for several hours in a gray, monotonous fog; the only realization that they are beginning to climb into the Bavarian mountains is the whine of the engine that causes them to downshift into a lower gear.

As they continue to climb they are suddenly flooded with the warm rays of the golden sun. They have emerged out of the fog and now find themselves in the crystal clear mountain top environment. They find themselves in an ancient hilltop village with gray cobblestone streets and white church spires that tower into the blue sky, and there is not a trace of fog. They have entered into sunshine, ...and worship. It is Sunday and through the streets come the worshippers; first the clergy in flowing white robes, followed by the choir in purple and gold, and then come the villagers marching to the toll of the bells. (POWER, 7/22/90, p.8)

What these summer vacationers experienced in their journey to the top of the Bavarian Alps, their journey through thick and depressing fog into brilliant sunshine and worship, well illustrates what awaits the Christian at the end of life's road. The experience of Old Testament Israel, as recorded in Exodus 18, is also the Christian's hope. Because the LORD is faithful to His promise, you can be assured that as a Christian your life will reach a glorious consummation "at the Mountain of God."

I. Be Assured that What Awaits You is A Reunion with Christian Loved Ones

Word reaches Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, concerning all that God has done on behalf of Moses and His people (18:1.) The mighty works of God were not done in secret; indeed, they would be broadcast throughout the ancient world and down the corridors of time. Witness Rahab's testimony to the two spies at the time Israel invaded the Promised Land of Canaan: "*We have heard how Jehovah dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt*" (Josh. 2:10.) Or again, witness the consternation of the Philistines in the days of Samuel, "*Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues ...*" (1 Sam. 4:8.)

Upon hearing the report of Israel's deliverance and the fact that Israel is now encamped at "*the Mount of God,*" Jethro departs from Midian to greet Moses. He does not go alone. Jethro brings with him Moses' wife, Zipporah, and Moses' two sons, Gershom and Eliezer (vs. 5.) There, at the Mount of God, they meet again in a most joyful reunion!

Christian, here is displayed before you one of the great joys of heaven: reunion with loved ones who have died in Christ. Listen to the tragic prayer of the pagan, (as quoted in a missionary newsletter,)

My father: Who died many years ago and entered the realm of spirits, I come to you with a pot of beer ... To you I pray, you who have gone before me into the land of darkness. That land from where there is no return. That awful land towards which I, too, am traveling.

and contrast that to the glorious hope offered to the Christian in the Word of God:

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.¹⁴We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him ...¹⁶... the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thess. 4:13-14, 16-18)

The calling of God separated Moses from his home life in the pastures of Midian, He was called to pack up the family, leave their home, and face the challenges that awaited them in Egypt. Sometimes the call of God may cause a Christian to leave behind home and family, sometimes even his native land. There is a real price to be paid, both by those who are called to go, and by those who must remain behind. But there is also a real privilege. Christian father and mother, you are being called to be like the heavenly Father who was willing to send His Son. Christian son or daughter, you are being called to be like the one and only Son who was willing to leave His heavenly home. Sooner or later the call of God causes Christian men and women to leave behind family, home, and this present world, to enter the Father's eternal home in glory, the place prepared for us by our Lord Jesus Christ,

Do not let your heart be troubled; trust in God, trust in me also. ²In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I am going to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me; so that where I am, you may be also. (Jn. 14:1-3)

The calling of God separated Moses from his family; for their own safety, he sent Zipporah and his sons back to Midian. Faithful obedience to Christ in the midst of a world at enmity against God sometimes involves heart-wrenching separation from loved ones. Consider, for example, Christians around the world who are imprisoned for their commitment to Christ. The names Moses gave to his sons reveal the agony he experienced in his soul—*"Gershom"* means "stranger" or "sojourner"—as well as the protective care and presence of the LORD our God, *"Eliezer"* means "God is my Help."

But now here come Jethro and Zipporah and Gershom and Eliezer; they are all reunited at the Mount of God. Note that Jethro, Moses, and the elders of Israel together will eat a meal in the presence of God: *"Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God"* (Ex. 18:12.) Here, again, is a foretaste of the fulfillment of the promise Jesus made to His disciples on the evening of the first communion supper: *"I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom"* (Matt. 26:29.)

Christian, be assured that what awaits you is a reunion with Christian loved ones in the presence of God.

II. Be Assured that What Awaits You is the Joy of the LORD

Jethro has heard of the mighty works of God, but now he receives a first hand report: *"Moses told his father-in-law all that Jehovah had done to Pharaoh and to*

the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had encountered along the way and how Jehovah had delivered them" (vs. 8.)

Although Moses faithfully related to his father-in-law both the triumphs of the LORD as well as the trials experienced in the wilderness, notice Jethro's response: *"Jethro rejoiced over all the good that Jehovah had done for Israel in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians" (vs. 9.)*

Did Moses down play the trials experienced in the wilderness? Did Jethro simply overlook them? No. Moses reported to his father-in-law *"all the hardships they had encountered along the way and how Jehovah had delivered them."* Standing at the Mount of God, Moses and Jethro could look back and see how all the works of God worked together to finally produce a glorious result. Jethro was led to rejoice for all the goodness of the LORD, not because he didn't have the whole story or because he intentionally overlooked parts of it, but precisely because he was given the complete and finished account. What the Apostle Paul asserts with confidence in Romans 8:28, *"we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, those who have been called according to his purpose,"* Jethro actually was made to see, and therefore he was led to rejoice in all the goodness of the LORD.

Christian, be assured that what awaits you is the joy of the LORD. What awaits you is the joy of experiencing the consummation of God's great work, being part of the finished work of redemption and participating in the new creation. What awaits you is the joy of deliverance into perfect peace and rest, the experience of what the Lord Jesus promises in John 16:21-22 and what the Apostle John was permitted to witness (as he records it in Revelation 21:3b-4,)

When a woman gives birth to a child she has pain, because her hour of delivery has come. But when the child is delivered, she no longer remembers the anguish; because of the joy that a child has been brought into the world. ²²So it is that you will now have grief; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you. (Jn. 16:21-22)

The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them. They shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. ⁴He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes. There shall be no more death, neither shall there be any mourning or crying or pain any more; the old order of things has passed away. (Rev. 21:3b-4)

What awaits you is the joy of the LORD Himself:

You will show me the path of life. In your presence is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures for evermore. (Psl. 16:11)

Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my exceeding joy. I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God. (Psl. 43:4)

His lord said to him, "...enter into the joy of your lord." (Matt. 25:21)

III. Be Assured that What Awaits You is a Full Measure of Understanding

Jethro testifies: *"Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all other gods"* (vs. 11a.) Prior to this time Jethro no doubt believed this to be true and accepted it as a God-given truth; but now he can testify that he **knows** this to be true.

Jethro testifies: *"Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all other gods; indeed, **this has been proven by his response to those who treated Israel arrogantly**"* (vs. 11.) The LORD irrefutably demonstrated the truth that He and He alone is God when He exerted His great power and acted both to redeem His people and to conquer His enemies. When the LORD acts, then what is accepted by faith becomes known by experience.

Christian, be assured that what awaits you at the end of life's road is a full measure of understanding.

What awaits you is a satisfying and sufficient understanding of the mysteries of God:

... at present our knowledge is partial and our prophesying is only a partial [communication of future things.] ¹⁰But when the perfect has come, the partial shall pass away ...¹²At present we see an obscure image in a mirror, but then we will see face to face. At present I know things partially; but then I will know fully, just as I am fully known. (1 Cor.13:9-10, 12)

What awaits you is an understanding of the judgments of God. By way of example, consider the word the LORD addressed to the prophet Ezekiel,

...when you see their conduct and their actions, you will be consoled regarding the disaster I have brought upon Jerusalem. ²³You will be consoled when you see their conduct and their actions, for you will know that I have done nothing in it without just cause, declares the Lord Jehovah. (Ezek.14:22-23.) Here is a reference specifically to the judgment the LORD brought upon Judah for their sins; when Ezekiel has full knowledge of the situation he will understand that the LORD's judgment was a righteous and just act.

What awaits you is an understanding of our relationship with the Lord our God, by means of the full experience of that wonderful relationship:

On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. (Jn.14:20.) Jesus is referring to the day of the resurrection and His return at the end of the age.

Conclusion

The experience of Old Testament Israel and Jethro, as recorded in Exodus 18, is also a foretaste of the Christian's hope.

As a Christian, this is what awaits you at the end of life's road: 1) a reunion with Christian loved ones; 2) the joy of the LORD in unlimited abundance; and, as much as is humanly possible, 3) a full measure of understanding concerning spiritual things.

Because the LORD is faithful to His promise, be assured that your Christian life will reach a glorious consummation "at the Mount of God."