**BCM Bible Study: February 3/4, 2021**

**Exodus 23:20-24:18**

Introduction: Did you take some time away from something you are attached to? (Sports, social media, a certain food, etc.) How did this go? What did you learn about yourself? Were you able to connect with God this week?

God Making a Way: **Read Exodus 23:20-26**

* What is the role of the angel in this passage?
  + These words about the angel come right after the law. Why is it significant that the focus turns from laws to God’s role in giving the land to Israel?
  + Throughout the journey of God’s people, it is increasingly clear that God is the one who will grant Israel success. “He is powerful, capable, and compassionate toward them. He is wise, wonderful, and in control, despite appearances to the contrary.” (Peter Enns)
    - What are the areas of your life where it seems like God is not in control? What does faithfulness look like for you with respect to these things?
* While God is the primary agent in this passage, what is said about human responsibility?
  + This passage includes stern warnings: either obey and see the rewards or don’t and suffer the consequences. Do you think such things apply to us today?
    - We must be careful to not fall into thinking that God works on a system of eye for an eye. We also must remember that these instructions and warning are giving to a people *who have already been redeemed*. Therefore, we can’t simply say that life will go well or won’t depending on how faithful we are. Rather, I think this passage is best understood as a warning similar to Hebrews 4:4-6. We must be careful to be obedient to God or we may end up in a bad spot. By the same token, life lived God’s way is the most likely path to peace and goodness.
  + What does it meant for you to be obedient to God?
    - What makes this hard? How can we succeed?

**Read Exodus 23:27-33**

* One of the major concerns of entering the promised land is expressed in 23:24-25, 32-33. If the Israelites lived amongst these people, they were likely to worship their gods. Turns out, they would do just that because they won’t end up being faithful and driving out the people. We too live amongst people who do not honor God.
  + What makes it hard for you to follow Jesus while living in a world that doesn’t honor Him?
  + First Peter gives advice to “exiles” like us: **Read 1 Peter 2:11-17, 4:12-14**.
    - How does Peter tell us to live?
    - How can you avoid conforming to the patterns of society?

Covenant Confirmation: **Read Exodus 24:1-8**

* What is happening in verses 4-8? What is the purpose of these actions? (This a covenant confirmation. They are agreeing to the terms of the covenant God given in the law. This section is their formal “yes.”)
* There are two offerings in this section: the burnt offering and fellowship offering. The first represents atonement for sin. The second represents fellowship with God. What is the relationship between these two things?
  + Later, Isaiah will point ahead to Christ, saying that he will sprinkle the nations with his blood: **Read Isaiah 52:13-15.** The New Testament tells us the implications of this: **Read Hebrews 10:19-23.**
  + Part of the focus on entire section (23:20-24:18) is God’s presence with his people and our ability to fellowship with him. Do you take time to regularly be with God? What works/doesn’t work well for you?
  + What could make you hesitant to approach God boldly? Does the sense of being guilty or not good enough ever hold you back? This passage is a great comfort to us!

**Read Exodus 24:9-18**

* Given what we have just discussed, why is it significant that God shows part of himself to the leaders?
  + Seeing God is the most significant event imaginable. His glory is such that, when faced with sin, it will be obliterated by His presence, so God must appear is some other form. (See notes for more) God says as much to Moses: **Read Exodus 33:20.** Understanding this, look at these passages in John: **Read John 1:14-18, 6:45-46, 14:8-9.** What do these passages say about Jesus?
    - “Christ’s uniquely intimate view of [the Father] has equipped him to turn to God’s creation and pass that gaze along.” (Peter Enns) In light of what we are seeing in Exodus, why is it significant that we see God in Jesus?
    - If Christ shows us God perfectly, what is God like? Describe him in a few words.
    - **Read 1 John 4:12**. What does this say about the significance of how we treat others? What does it look like to act this way?
* It is significant that, while the men are beholding God, they eat a meal. Throughout Scripture, a meal is a symbol of God’s intimate relationship with his people. In fact, when Christ comes to live with us, this will be marked by a meal. **Read Isaiah 25:6-8, Rev. 19:9.** 
  + How does this shed light on the significance of the Lord’s Supper?
  + How does it strike you that God wants an intimate relationship with you? Does this concept feel familiar? Foreign? Out of reach? Frustrating? Hopeful? Discuss why you feel the way you do.

Conclusion: If I could choose one takeaway for this week, it would be that God wants to know you and be with you. Spend some time being really honest with God this week. Tell him how you’re really feeling and create some quiet space to listen for his voice.

Notes

* We discussed the angel back in chapter 3 at the burning bush. This is what I said back then: “There is a lot to say about the identity of the angel of the Lord. In fact, Jude 5 attributes actions of the angel of the Lord to Jesus. At times it seems that the angel is the Lord Himself, while in other occasions some sort of distinction is made.” I stand by that and add that in this passage, the distinction between them seems especially blurred, especially since it says that the Lord’s “Name” (signifying God’s presence) is in the angel. This angel doesn’t receive the designation of “angel of the Lord,” but it seems to at least act of the Lord’s behalf.
* God’s terror could mean a number of things. Peter Enns thinks it’s news of what God did in Egypt, which definitely has support if you continue reading the OT. But I also think it could mean a broad range of things. The hornet is also not an actual hornet (though a divine hornet would be cool…). Actually, the word there is tough to translate, and it is likely analogous to the terror in the previous verse.
* The slow taking of the land is for the people’s good. If the Canaanites were wiped out, there is no way the Israelites would be able to take care of all that land. He would give them the land as they grew to take care of it.
* My commentary dives into an interesting discussion about the borders of the land described here. Basically, Enns suggests that at it’s greatest size, Israel will never reach these borders, which invites some questions. Did God fail to do what he said? In the end, if you don’t read the New Testament it could seem like God “failed” in a number of ways. Ezra and Nehemiah leave you with a sense of disappointment. Regarding the land, Enns suggests that this “disappointment” serves the purpose of pointing us to the greater reality that the land represents – God’s intention to rule the whole earth. It’s as if this passage says, “don’t think God is going to stop here.” This is interesting, but probably not enough the point of the passage to include in the Bible study.
* It’s easy to lose track of when Moses is on the mountain and when he’s not. There are a few ways to understand ch. 24, but the following sequence makes the most sense to me. The chapter begins with Moses on the mountain having received the law. He is told to go get the others and come back. Moses goes down, shares the words and laws of the Lord (v.3), and covenant confirmation ceremony happens (v.4-8). Then, Moses goes back up the mountain with the others (v.9), this time to receive instructions about the tabernacle and to receive stones with the law written on them.
* In the Bible study, I am not addressing the topic of why blood is necessary for a covenant. First off, Hebrews 9:11-28 gives a nice explanation, but it would be somewhat of a rabbit trail for this study. Suffice to say that sin deserves death, and blood means that death has occurred. Christ’s death is on our behalf, so we are sprinkled with the blood as a representation of that reality.
* Here’s some nerdy Greek for you. In Hebrews 10:22, the “having our heart sprinkled” phrase is the perfect tense. In Greek, this refers to a past action that has continuing effects into the future.
* On the subject of seeing God, it is a rare event in the Old Testament. There are a few notable occasions – Hagar, Jacob, and Isaiah. But in all these, God appears in some kind of obscured form (an angel, like a man, and in a vision)
* We will see in the coming weeks that the tabernacle will be modeled after Mt. Sinai. There will be different levels of “access” to God, and only the high priest (represented here by Moses, later Christ, and then us by our union with Christ) will have the most intimate access to God). The ancient people thought of gods as living on mountains and gardens (think of Eden), so it is remarkable that God would meet his people on a mountain, probably in part so that they could understand what was happening.
* I really wish time permitted me to point you to the feeding of the 5,000 in light of what we are discussing about the significance of feasts. If you have time, read it thinking about Jesus as inaugurating the eschatological feast in Isaiah 25:6-8.
* I don’t think we know what is on the tablets, but it could be the Ten Commandments, or maybe more of the law.
* It’s not terribly surprising that God appears in a cloud – we’ve seen this image already and we will see it again to end the book.