

God and His People

Recently I have been looking more closely at the book of Exodus and specifically the relationship between the Israelites, Moses and God. What I did not realise when beginning this journey was just how much God is speaking to His people today through what His people then, went through.

Imagine a people who have just experienced freedom from four hundred years of bondage, not only have they witnessed a sea open up before them, allowing them to cross, but then that same sea closed up over those marching out against them. I think they would have been a happy bunch of people.

It is no wonder that we read in Exodus 15:20 after God had opened up the Red Sea and the Israelites had crossed '...Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing.' Between eight hundred thousand to a million women playing tambourines and dancing. What a praise service that would have been!

However, this joy was short lived, in fact, it was not the first time we can see God providing for the Israelites, and in return seeing them grumble and complain because, in their opinion, God had not provided what they wanted.

It seems that the Israelites only wanted God for what He could do for them and when that did not suit them, they were more than willing to turn away and go their own way. A few more days pass and then food becomes an issue. They complain saying 'Oh that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger' Ex. 16:3.

Can you see a pattern? The Israelites are happy as long as God is doing what they want when they want it, yet when God is not doing what they want they become disgruntled and unhappy.

One thing to note here is that their core motivation is evidenced by their behaviour under pressure. What does our behaviour under pressure reveal about our core motivation? Are we the sort of people who seek God for what He can do; or are we seeking Him for who He is?

The Israelites were the people in the first category, they were most definitely seeking God for what He could do for them, which is why we read so many times how they turned against God when things were not going their way. We read how the Israelites began to lash out against Moses saying, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians' for it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness." Ex. 16:8.

Their own selfish desires and best interests overrode their desire to fulfil God's will. It is interesting to read how they say 'it would have been better for us to...' the Israelites

lacked a burning desire to seek God, they became consumed with a love for their own lives.

In the midst the attitude that the people of Israel had, it is amazing how Moses replies to God when God told him He could no longer lead this people into the Promised Land. God told Moses He would even send a choice angel with them to drive out their enemies so the land could be secured; however, He (His presence) was not going! The people of Israel probably would have packed up and gone with the angel before God had finished if they had had the chance. Think about it, they were willing to return to Egypt without an angel protecting them, just to escape the desert discomforts, I am sure they would have taken the Promise Land with an angel. Yet hear the reply of Moses to God's offer:

'If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here.' Ex. 33:15

Here we see Moses desiring God for who He is. Moses would rather have God's presence in the desolate uncomfortable place rather than to been in a place of beauty void of God's presence! Moses desire God more than His promised blessings. God had promised the people of Israel a land flowing with milk and honey, Ex3:8, yet Moses was willing to forfeit all that that promise held, to have intimacy with God. This set apart Moses from the children of God. They sought God for what He did while Moses sought God for who He is!

John Bevere, in his book Drawing Near, says how 'this driving motivation separates believers into two groups today. This division goes beyond denomination, there are those who are yet to realise they can seek God for more than His protection, provision and promotion, they can also embrace Him for who He is and know Him intimately.'

Do you long to know God more intimately, maybe it is time to reassess what your driving force is? Which category do you fall into: those who seek God for what He can do, or those who seek Him for what He is? Do you long for an intimate relationship with God even more than the promises you have heard Him speak over your life?

These are challenging questions. But depending on our answers that will determine how truly satisfied we are. Is it any wonder the man who had wealth beyond measure, stockpiles of silver was also the man who wrote in Psalm 86 'Bow down Your ear, O Lord, hear me; for I am poor and needy.' King David's need was greater that anything the world could offer him, His hunger was for God.

If we truly seek God for who He is, above all else, even the promises God himself has spoken to us, I believe we will see and hear things of God we never thought imaginable.

Article by John Martin

John is the Lead Worshipper of Oasis Christian Centre Redditch

