**Session 17: Week 10a**

***God of Deliverance***

**Exodus 17-18**

**9-10 January 2023**

**Review** – We saw that God drew the people of Israel from the shores of the Red Sea to the desert with a specific purpose in mind: He drew them there to *test* them. The first two tests involved their receiving living water and manna, the “bread of life”. He also introduced to them the idea of *Sabbath rest*. A rhythm of rest was commanded for them for the purpose of worshipping God.

**Intensified Conflict** – When the people reached Marah, God tested them with bitter water. But at Massah and Meribah, the people tested God. Their protest also increased in intensity from grumbling to quarreling. This time they didn’t just pick at Moses, they made open threats to harm him. In fact, the Hebrew word translated “quarreling” in this passage means “to bring legal suit against someone”. So they were suing Moses and even bringing a suit against God Himself. And in Moses’ case, it is implied that they even threatened the death penalty (stoning)!

**Testing God** – When God tests us, it is for our good. But when we test God, it is never good because we are saying, in essence, “You work for us, and You have fallen down on the job.” When God tests us, He is getting us into a submissive posture so we will follow where He leads. But when we test God, we demonstrate a rebellious attitude.

**Trial and Judgment** – God’s instructions to Moses closely parallel what He said when Moses was to strike the Nile River with the staff. At that time Moses was to strike the Nile in the presence of the elders of Egypt so that they could bear witness to the judgment of God meted out on the Nile. Now he is to strike the rock of Horeb in the presence of the elders of Israel so they can bear witness to the judgment of God being meted out on the rock. This is a *courtroom scene*, with God Himself on trial. The merciful outcome is that streams of living water gush out for the people to drink, even as they continue in their quarrelsome speech against Him. This is not at all what we would expect. There is a staff of judgment, and we would expect it to fall on these rebellious people. Instead, it falls on the Rock that pictures Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 10:1-4). This courtroom scene is actually a picture of the work of the Cross. As Jesus told the Pharisees, the things written in the Old Testament were in reality written about Him.

**The First Battle** – We saw earlier in the text that when Pharoah’s army pursued the Israelites, they did not have to fight. God told them to just stand still and watch how He would deliver them. But when the Amelekites attack, God tells them to take up arms and fight, and He will fight with them. Why did Amelek attack them? Probably it was to keep this vast multitude of people and animals from consuming all the food and water available in the uninhabitable desert where Amelek lived. And he had probably heard about the masses of plunder these former slaves carried with them out of Egypt. So Amelek views them as both a potential threat and an easy target. His heinous strategy is to attack those who were lagging behind the rest (the elderly, the sick, mothers with small children, etc.) In other words, he goes for the weak and helpless and cuts them off. This is why God’s wrath comes so strongly against him.

**The Victorious Hand of Moses** – We are told that as long as Moses’ hands were raised, Joshua prevailed in the battle. When Moses’ hands were down, Amelek prevailed. This is another scene that pictures a much bigger truth. When Moses raises his hands, he is acting as a mediator between the children of God and God. Moreover, he is doing so on top of a hill . . . with his hands outstretched. Just so, when Jesus hung on the cross with His arms outstretched, He did not drop them until the victory was won . . . even though He had no one to help support them.

**Joshua (Yeshua), Another Picture of Christ** – Joshua’s name means “God will save.” And where is he during the battle? Fighting alongside his people. So too Christ both intercedes for us and fights alongside us.

**A Book of Remembrance of God’s Faithfulness** – Moses is instructed to write all these events down and go over them specifically with Joshua. Why? Because Joshua is the one who is going to lead the people in battle when they enter the Promised Land. And the next time Joshua fights the Amelekites, the Amelekites are going to *win*. So Joshua is going to need this promise that they will ultimately be defeated. In fact, the promise is not a new one. God had told Abraham centuries before that He would bless those who blessed him and curse those cursed him. The Amalekites have cursed Abraham’s descendants, and so God will curse him. God is always faithful to keep His word, not just in blessings but also in regard to those He has cursed.

**God’s Banner** – Chapter 17 closes with reference to a banner that Moses raised. This “banner” was more what we would consider an *ensign*, i.e. a flag used as a rallying point in battle. In fact, the ensign referred to the staff that Moses always carried; he was calling everyone to rally around the staff, the ensign of the Lord, as the Lord battles against Amelek from generation to generation.