

Reading Schedule for March 20-26, 2017

We cover a lot of ground this week as the Hebrews begin their journey into the wilderness. There had to be a great deal of excitement, as God was delivering them from the hands of the Egyptians. These readings will have their ups and downs, but God would prevail.

March 20 – Exodus 13:1-16: “Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal.” (v.2) The word “consecrate” is not one we use very often in our language today. But it simply means to dedicate something as belonging to the Lord. It would help God’s people to remember that it was through the sacrifice of the firstborn that they had been delivered. It also foreshadowed the firstborn of the Almighty God, as he would send his Son to deliver us. There is always purpose in God’s plan. The instructions to this important stipulation are found in verses 11-16. You understand that God spared the oldest son of every house marked with blood on the doorframe. Because God saved the lives of the firstborn, he had a rightful claim to them. If the Passover event was not enough, then the consecration of the firstborn would continually remind them of the extent of which God would go to redeem his people. Does this make sense? How does this interesting stipulation inspire you?

March 21 – Exodus 13:17-14:31: “Moses answered the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again.’” (14:13) The Lord had shown himself so powerful on their behalf, and yet they are in a situation now that is nothing less than terrifying. Pharaoh comes with all his troops to capture God’s people. But I love what Moses says, “The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.” (v.14) The parting of the Red Sea would be an event that would encourage God’s people up to this very day. Moses called upon God to intervene and he did so, and we continue to ask God to intervene in our own lives. Take Moses’ admonition to heart – stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will bring. You can trust in that truth still today. Do you agree? How do you respond to the Hebrews crossing the Red Sea?

March 22 – Exodus 15:1-21: “Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: ‘I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.’” (v.1) There are a number of statements in this song that I could highlight, but the idea of Moses and the Israelites singing this song to the Lord is really the first time I remember singing and worship being mentioned in the Bible. I could be wrong about that, but to me it seems that it’s the oldest recorded song ever written. This event would be mentioned in many other songs, as well as in the Book of Psalms. From this point on, we will read other Psalms that celebrate God’s victory. I especially appreciate Hannah’s song, as recorded in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. This will begin a suggested way of expressing praise and thanks to God with poetic language and an accompanying melody. This is a beautiful launch to a tradition that will carry us into heaven as we worship God for his help in our lives and his character of love and justice, which is worthy of our worship. How do you respond to this first recorded song of praise?

March 23 – Exodus 15:22-16:36: “When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, ‘It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat.’” (16:15) I am reading one miracle after another from the hand of God. And it is not as if the Israelites deserve it. Their faith is very fragile, and when circumstances are difficult, they tend to grumble. God would have every right to

just let them die in the wilderness. But his covenant affection to His people is everlasting. Manna appeared on the ground each morning as thin flakes like frost. The people gathered it, ground it like grain and made it into honey-tasting pancake. Jesus compares himself to manna in John 6:48-51. Christ is our daily bread who satisfies our eternal, spiritual need. I love the connection that the New Testament makes to the Old Testament, giving it even deeper meaning for us today. What stands out to you in this episode with God and his people?

March 24 – Exodus 17:1-16: “As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning.” (v.11) I have thought of this event as an example of intercession to God. Prayer demolishes the devil’s strongholds. We studied that this Sunday from 2 Corinthians 10:1-6. This is an Old Testament story that highlights this same truth about prayer. Moses lifted his hands in prayer and dependence on God, and because of his intercession, the Israelites gained victory. I also think it is interesting to realize that Moses was human, and he would be vulnerable to grow weary, so his companions were of a great help to him. The Israelites were fighting fiercely, and maybe only realized later that it was the blessing of God that brought the victory. For me this is motivation for prayer, and as a spiritual leader I want to continue to be faithful in my intercession for the ministry of our church, as well as our church family. Do you agree? How do you respond to this powerful illustration of God’s victory through surrendered prayer?

March 25 – Exodus 18:1-27: “Moses’ father-in-law replied, ‘What you are doing is not good.’” (v.17) This story has always been a great example to me as a leader. I cannot do it on my own. Moses’ father-in-law encourages him to delegate. People in positions of responsibility sometimes feel they are the only ones who can do the necessary task. But I know this is not true, and you do too. We are meant to do this together. Sometimes the church looks at the pastors who are paid to do the ministry. But this would rob people of the opportunity to be contributors and use their gifts. We are called to be a body, and everyone is important. Moses did not realize that until he heard these wise words from Jethro, his father-in-law. How do you respond to this principle of delegation? Are there areas in your life where you would do well to delegate? How so?

March 26 – Exodus 19:1-25: “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.’” (v. 10 & 11) Again, I am drawn to this principle of consecration. It has a foundational meaning of being ready to meet God and to have the right heart to do so. There is an aspect of confession of sin and being assured of forgiveness. It also is a call to worship. I would like you to consecrate yourself as you anticipate joining others in worship today, which is Sunday. I hope you are reading this before church, but maybe you aren’t, and you can anticipate other times when you will gather with God’s people to be ready to meet the Lord. I think God wants to show up in a powerful way, and yet our attention is sometimes on other things. As we come to church and worship the Lord together, and hear his Word, are you ready to receive it? This is a very important principle. I encourage you to meditate on what it means to consecrate yourself to the Lord.

Prayers: Please pray for the meaning of Lent to be a season of reflection and consecration to the Lord so that we might fully celebrate Easter.