

I am Going to Send an Angel

Message 32

10/31/2021

Exodus 23:20–33 (CSB)

PROMISES AND WARNINGS

20 “I am going to send an angel before you to protect you on the way and bring you to the place I have prepared. **21** Be attentive to him and listen to him. Do not defy him, because he will not forgive your acts of rebellion, for my name is in him. **22** But if you will carefully obey him and do everything I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes. **23** For my angel will go before you and bring you to the land of the Amorites, Hethites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out. **24** Do not bow in worship to their gods, and do not serve them. Do not imitate their practices. Instead, demolish them and smash their sacred pillars to pieces. **25** Serve the LORD your God, and he will bless your bread and your water. I will remove illnesses from you. **26** No woman will miscarry or be childless in your land. I will give you the full number of your days.

27 “I will cause the people ahead of you to feel terror and will throw into confusion all the nations you come to. I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you in retreat. **28** I will send hornets in front of you, and they will drive the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hethites away from you. **29** I will not drive them out ahead of you in a single year; otherwise, the land would become desolate, and wild animals would multiply against you. **30** I will drive them out little by little ahead of you until you have become numerous and take possession of the land. **31** I will set your borders from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates River. For I will place the inhabitants of the land under your control, and you will drive them out ahead of you. **32** You must not make a covenant with them or their gods. **33** They must not remain in your land, or else they will make you sin against me. If you serve their gods, it will be a snare for you.”

1. The First 19 verses reaffirm God's commitment to justice, truth, and Sabbath.

A. These themes have come up often in our series.

1. Israel is reminded to treat people fairly.
2. Israel is warned about misusing justice and bearing false witness.
3. Israel is reminded of the importance of Sabbath and the necessity to worship God appropriately during feast Days.

B. Many of these themes we have talked about or will talk about in the New Year.

1. I'm excited because, in March, we will have a special weekend intensive addressing Christ in the Tabernacle and several of these themes in greater detail.
2. This morning, I point our attention to the last part of Exodus 23.

2. Starting with verse 20, Israel is told how God wanted to lead Israel into the Promised Land.

A. Notice what God said He was going to do:

1. He was going to send an angel ahead of them.
2. The angel would drive out the wicked inhabitants.
3. God was willing to bless their bread (food).
4. He was going to remove illnesses and remove the loss of blessing caused by miscarriage.
5. God was going to send hornets to drive out the inhabitants.
6. God was going to expand their borders and possessions.
7. In other words, God was allowing Israel to experience a taste of what God had intended at the Garden of Eden.

8. Although sin would still be in play, Israel would get to experience a greater degree of the blessings that God intended.

B. BUT...Israel had responsibilities too.

1. They had to be attentive to the Angel's leadership and obey Him.

2. Israel could not participate in the false worship that the Promised Land promoted.

3. Israel had to smash the idols and altars they found.

4. Israel could not allow the evil influences to stay; they were commanded to intentionally expel the false religions.

C. God promised amazing opportunities for Israel but also required her to take responsibility and ownership of her sphere of influence.

1. Too often, **We want blessing without responsibility.**

2. We desire the Promised Land without the battle.

3. We ask for God's presence but want to keep our idols.

3. Israel missed out on almost all of the blessings God made available.

A. Notice I did not say promised.

1. Our culture misunderstands the concept of promise.

a. Many people claim the promises of God yet do not have a relationship with Him.

b. **The promises of God are for the children of God.**

1. If you are not in relationship with God, you can't claim healing for yourself.

2. If you are living for the devil, you can't claim the promise that God will never leave you or forsake you.

3. If you are outside of Covenant with God, you cannot claim the Promise that Jesus will return and bring you to Himself in the place He has prepared for you.

B. What God declared for Israel in Exodus 23 is not Promise but Covenant.

1. This section is part of the Book of the Covenant.
2. A Covenant is a contract between two parties.
3. God declared: If you do what I ask of you, then I will do this.

C. Two critical details about this Covenant:

1. It was between God and Israel, not with you.
2. Second, Israel never kept their part of the Covenant.
 - a. In about a month, Israel would worship the Golden Calf.
 - b. A little while after that, they would deny God's power at the edge of the Promised Land.
 - c. 40 years later, they would not remove all of the inhabitants of the land.
 - d. A few hundred years later, God would evict them from the Promise Land and put them in Exile because of their disobedience.
3. Israel never kept her part of the Covenant, and therefore never received the blessings God made available to her.

4. This brings us to some bad theology that infiltrates the Church.

A. One piece of bad/wrong theology is that "Christians never get sick."

1. Some may point to this verse and say "Look, God said he will remove illnesses from you."
2. God meant what He said here.

a. He wanted to remove illness and sickness from Israel in the Promised Land, if they obeyed.

b. But they consistently and willfully sinned against God.

c. So they never experienced that blessing.

3. Since then, people of all times and all places have experienced sickness.

a. Sickness is not part of God's design but part of the fall.

b. Unfortunately, God's people experience sickness and will until Jesus returns and restores Creation to its perfect design.

4. When you are sick, take solace in remembering that:

a. The Apostle Paul dealt with severe eyes issues.

b. Timothy experienced anxiety and ulcers, which is why Paul told him to take a little wine for the stomach.

c. The great pastor and preacher Charles Spurgeon battled severe depression.

d. Smith Wigglesworth had trouble with kidney stones.

e. Do not allow well-intentioned Christians to attach guilt and shame to your sickness.

5. We are all called to believe for healing and to heal the sick.

a. Jesus is our healer.

b. The reality of sickness does not cancel out God's power to heal.

6. But not all sickness is tied directly to our willful sin.

a. Job was a righteous man yet experienced a terrible season of suffering.

b. The Disciples once asked Jesus about a beggar, “who sinned that this man was born this way? Him or his family?”

c. Jesus responded neither, but this happened so that the work of God would be displayed. John 9.

7. What I’m saying is, when someone is sick, be compassionate.

a. Pray for healing.

b. Walk in faith.

c. Be bold in your prayers.

d. But don’t start casting blame.

e. **Nowhere is this “blame game” more evident than in the next part of this verse.**

B. God told Israel that, if they would be obedient, then no women would miscarry.

1. This is a restoration of God’s original design and intent.

a. God created women to have babies.

b. God did not create the process to be painful nor were miscarriages part of God’s original design.

c. Sin messed all of that up.

d. Part of the curse was that God would multiply the pains of childbirth.

2. Unfortunately, some of you here today know full well the pain of miscarriage.

a. During that season, you were bombarded with tons of emotions, thoughts, and **well-intentioned advice that was pretty terrible.**

b. If at all possible, I want to undo some the bad theology you might have heard.

3. If you were told that you had a miscarriage because of sin, that was wrong.

a. Sure, sometimes miscarriages are due to unhealthy behavior during pregnancy.

b. But what about those of you who did right, and still lost the baby.

b. I'm sorry if someone pointed you back to scriptures like this and said "look, if you will just obey God this wouldn't have happened."

1. That takes Scripture out of context.

2. Too often, people say things like that to make them feel better about themselves and their own beliefs.

c. **Words that twist Scripture are hurtful and come from Satan because they operate in the realm of condemnation.**

4. *If you were told "heaven needed another angel" I'm sorry they trivialized your experience with something that wasn't true at all.*

a. Your baby isn't merely an angel in heaven.

b. Instead, they are a full-grown person who is experiencing the presence of Jesus.

c. This is greater than being an angel.

1. Too often, we don't know what to say so we make stuff up.

2. Sometimes, people aren't trying to make you feel better, they are trying to make themselves feel better.

Word of Prayer: Lord, for all the women and families who have endured miscarriages, would your love and peace overwhelm them even now.

C. God did present Israel with an opportunity to not experience miscarriages, and for them to live and then die “at the full number of your days” and to have their enemies driven out by hornets, and for the borders to extend from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean.

1. God presented this all to Israel, as a blessing for obedience.
2. But **the lure of sin was stronger than the lure of blessing.**
3. Israel chose to disobey and worship false gods and turn her back on God's great Covenant and blessing.

5. What do I do with this passage?

Even though the details of this passage were for a specific time and people, some principles apply to us.

A. First, we don't possess our Promised Land without a struggle.

1. The Promised Land, which for us is a future in God's presence, has already been secured by Jesus' resurrection from the dead.
 - a. In that day, there will be no more pain, death, sorrow, or trouble.
 - b. **What God wanted Israel to experience, in part, in the Promised Land of Canaan will be experienced in perfection with Jesus at His return.**
2. However, the New Testament is full of “endurance” language.
 - a. Paul talks about running the race and fighting the good fight. 1 Cor. 9.
 - b. John tells each Church of Revelation that there are blessings and rewards for those who “endure and overcome.”
 - c. Paul describes the Christian life in terms of Spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6.

d. There is more to Christianity than giving your life to Jesus and waiting to die; there is an enemy to engage and battles to be won.

3. Just as Israel was expected to encounter and overcome the inhabitants of the Promised Land through the power of God, we are expected to encounter and overcome the enemies of Jesus through the power of Holy Spirit.

B. Two, our victories are often slower than we want.

1. Exodus 23 contains a great line: ²⁹ I will not drive them out ahead of you in a single year; otherwise, the land would become desolate, and wild animals would multiply against you. ³⁰ I will drive them out little by little ahead of you until you have become numerous and take possession of the land.”

2. Most of us want God to remove all of our obstacles and enemies at once.

a. We want the easiest path to victory.

b. Yet, we are not always ready to take possession of the victory God wants for us.

1. An imperfect example of this is my prayer for a house.

2. I had dreamed of buying my own house for several years.

3. Here’s the goodness of God: I could not have afforded the house I just bought 10 years ago.

c. Another example:

1. When I became pastor, I inherited some beautiful building plans for another building on the edge of town.

2. For years, we prayed and worked toward bringing that dream to reality.

a. But I was frustrated because, no matter how hard I tried, I could get nothing going.

b. That building would have been less than half the size that we are in now.

c. I'm thankful that the Lord did not give us the victory to build a 10,000 sqft building.

3. Throughout Israel's story, we come across the phrase "And they went up in stages..."

a. Numbers 33:1-2 (CSB)

33 These were the stages of the Israelites' journey when they went out of the land of Egypt by their military divisions under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. ² At the Lord's command, Moses wrote down the starting points for the stages of their journey; these are the stages listed by their starting points:

b. God often allows us to gain victory in "stages".

1. Today's lessons prepare us for tomorrow's victories.

2. God uses process to prepare us for tomorrow's battles.

3. An easy example is found in the life of David.

a. Leading sheep had to come before leading a nation.

b. Killing lions and bears was practiced before killing giants.

c. Loving a Saul prepared David for loving an Absalom.

4. Do not despise God's process.

a. He uses our past and present to prepare us for a greater future.

- b. Be mindful of the lessons God is teaching you today.
5. Don't give up if you feel like you have been waiting too long for victory to come.
- a. Victory may be right around the corner.
 - b. God has repeatedly demonstrated that He can do more in an instant than we can do in a lifetime.

C. Third, Remember we do not fight alone.

1. God promised to send an Angel before Israel.
 - a. God told Israel that His name was in him.
 - b. This was an extension of Yahweh himself.¹
 - c. In other words, God's presence had led Israel this far in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night.
 - d. And now God was going to lead Israel into the Promised Land personally and defeat their enemies.
 - e. That is why Israel's lack of faith resulted in a whole generation dying and missing out.
 - f. They hadn't only rejected God's promise but also His Presence.
2. For you and me today, we do not have to wait for an Angel to lead us.
 - a. You and I are led by and through the Holy Spirit.
 - b. The Spirit of God that led Israel in the Wilderness now lives inside of us.
3. Not only does He lead us, but He also fights with us and for us.

¹ This latter statement is virtually an assertion of equivalence: the "messenger" = Yahweh.

- a. When you face temptation, you do not fight alone.
- b. when you face discouragement, you do not fight alone.
- c. When the early Apostles and Disciples faced courts, kings, and angry mobs, they could withstand and endure because of the Spirit of God within them.
- d. Today, your best weapons against the attacks of the enemy are not:
 1. The guns on your hip or safe.
 2. The Constitution of the United States.
 3. The strength of your back or the money in your bank.
- e. The greatest weapons you have been given to endure and win come from the Spirit of God.
 1. Prayer.
 2. Scripture
 3. Worship.
 4. The Armor of God.

Close: Today, I want to pray for all of us who facing a battle.

A. We are striving for a Promise Land.

1. Ultimately, that Promise Land is hearing Jesus say "Well done good and faithful servant."
2. But in the meantime, we are striving to see people saved.
- 3 We are fighting to see marriages restored and families redeemed.
4. We are battling against attacks of the enemy that are camouflaged by culture, preference, falsehood, and politics.

B. Today, I want to invite everyone who will to come across the front and pray for a few minutes.

1. We want to pray for victory.
2. We want to pray for deliverance.
3. We want to pray for healing.
4. We want to offer ourselves to God to do what is right, pure, and holy.