

# Twentieth Century Jethro

by H. P. Barker

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*The sermon warns against being a Twentieth Century Jethro, someone who fails to rise to the height of God's purpose for His people and gives a secondary place to the wonderful portion that belongs to the Church.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 18:19

**Topics:** "Heavenly Calling", "Spiritual Identity"

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## Description

H. P. Barker preaches about the cautionary tale of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, who despite his good qualities and wise counsel, failed to fully identify with the people of God and embrace God's purpose for His chosen ones. Jethro rejoiced in God's goodness towards Israel, offered wise advice to Moses, and showed kindness to his family, yet he chose to return to his own land instead of fully engaging with God's people. Similarly, many today may have admirable qualities but fall short of fully understanding and embracing their heavenly calling as Christians, missing out on the richness of God's purpose and the reproach of Christ.

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## Transcript

And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people...and came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness....Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land (Exodus 18:1,5,27).

In almost every city and village throughout Christendom there are to be found twentieth century Jethros. Speaking of them after the manner of men, they are generally excellent folks, courteous, liberal, of good repute among their neighbors, well disposed towards all. There is much to be said in their favor. But they are Jethros. Let me explain what I mean.

Jethro was sincerely glad to hear of a good work going on among other people (Ex. 18:9). Moses told him the story of God's gracious dealings with the people of Israel; how He had delivered them from the cruel bondage of Egypt, and had marvelously provided for their need in the wilderness. "And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel."

Jethro could give very wise counsel as to how God's work should be done (Ex. 18:19). He saw that Moses was bearing too heavy a burden, and suggested to him that he should share it with others. Able, God-fearing, truth-loving men were to be selected, who should share the judicial responsibilities of the great lawgiver, and relieve him of all concern as to the minor matters that might call for a decision.

Jethro was kind and hospitable to his relatives (18:6). Jethro kindly took charge of Zipporah and her two sons under his hospitable roof while Moses was away in Egypt, seeking the deliverance of Israel.

While all this was true of Jethro, it was also true that he refrained from fully identifying himself with the people of God. He took no part in their conflicts with their enemies, nor in their wilderness exercises. He acknowledged the greatness and supremacy of the true God (18:11), but never rose to the height of His glorious purpose for the people of His choice. His action spoke loudly enough that he had no desire to be a participator with them in the prospect God set before them. "He went his way into his own land" (18:27).

It is to be feared that there are many today who bear a striking resemblance to Jethro. In spite of their many excellent qualities, they fail to rise to the height of God's purpose for His people. They apprehend but feebly the nature of the calling wherewith they are called. Their appreciation of the heavenly relationships in which Christians are set is small indeed, and they give a very secondary place to the wonderful portion that belongs to the Church, the body and bride of Christ. They may rejoice to hear of the prosperity of the Lord's work in their own locality, or in regions beyond the seas, but when one speaks to them of God's wonderful purpose for us, and of our heavenly calling, there is little response. They are not practically "strangers and pilgrims" on earth. They do not throw themselves wholeheartedly into the wilderness conflicts which are the experience of those who seek to appropriate, in the energy of the Spirit of God, the heavenly portion of the Church. As a result, they know little of that priceless treasure of the reproach of Christ which, in Moses' reckoning, was "greater riches" than all the wealth of Egypt (Heb. 11:26).

Do you lay it to heart that the calling of the people of God is a heavenly one, and that we are not left in the world for a while in order to throw ourselves into the current of its ambitions and pursuits (even with the best of motives), but that we may be altogether apart from it in spirit, while serving the interests of Christ as His ambassadors in it? Carry this question into the presence of God, and seek grace from Him to keep you from being a Twentieth Century Jethro.

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