

**Exegetical Notes, Exodus 23:20-33**  
**“God’s Angel Goes Before”**

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**Exodus 23:20-33**

**Verse 20**

*“See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared.”*

- A powerful angel accompanied Israel as they made their way to the Promised Land. This being had already acted to protect them. See Exodus 14:19.
- While the word translated “angel” means messenger and could apply to either a human messenger or a divine one, it is clear from Exodus 14:19, that this being is not human.
- The purpose of this angel is to guard Israel as they travel and to bring the people safely to the Promised Land.

**Verse 21-22**

*“Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion since my Name is in him. If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you.”*

- As we have seen in our study of Exodus, the repeated lesson of the book is LISTEN, DO (OBEY), BE BLESSED. Here, that lesson is repeated again. If Israel will listen to the instructions that the angel gives, and follow them, God will bless her.
- The angel is to be listened to because God’s “Name is in him.” The phrase means that the angel is God’s servant. He belongs to God and has been sent by God.
- To not listen to the angel, is to choose one’s own way as opposed to God’s way. This is considered rebellion against God and such rebellion will not be forgiven. It is intolerable in God’s sight.

- But, if the angel is listened to and obeyed, blessing will follow, for God will take Israel's side in everything that she faces along the way.

### **Verse 23**

***“My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out.”***

- God indicates specifically where the Promised Land will be. However, while it is promised to Israel, it is already occupied. As sovereign Lord of the Universe and Creator of the Universe, God owns it all. We are but tenants on the earth for a limited time. As owner, it is God's right to assign portions of the place to those to whom he chooses. It is his right by ownership. Thus he may take land occupied by another and reassign it at his pleasure.
- That the land is already occupied implies that there will be obstacles to Israel's claim to it. However, God promises to remove the obstacles.

### **Verse 24**

***“Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces.”***

- Israel is carefully warned not to yield to the influence of the cultures that already live in the land that God has promised to give them. They are to demolish the false gods and the places of worship dedicated to these false gods. This command is unequivocal. There are no exceptions allowed.

### **Verse 25-26**

***“Worship YHWH your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span.”***

- Here are the blessings that God promised to give to Israel if they would listen and obey. Their food and water would be safe. Sickness would disappear among them. Women would not miscarry in childbirth. No family would be barren. They would all live full, long lives. All this would be given to them if they listened to YHWH and obeyed him.

### **Verse 27-29**

***“I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites out of your way. But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land.”***

- God’s plan is revealed. Gradually, He will remove the current inhabitants of the place from it and give it to Israel. His plan does not require the slaughter of the current inhabitants of the place. He will gradually relocate them to other places to give the place to Israel.
- However, the plan is contingent upon Israel’s obedience to God. Israel must not become involved with the religious practices of these people and she must allow God time to work his plan on her behalf.

### **Verse 30-33**

***“I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River. I will hand over to you the people who live in the land and you will drive them out before you. Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. Do not let them live in your land, or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you.”***

- God promises that he will establish Israel in the land that he intends for them to have. All they need do is listen to him and follow his plan.
- Specifically, they must not make treaties with the people who live in the Promised Land for these will hinder God’s action, and they must not worship the gods of these people. God full well understands the attraction these false gods will have for the Israelites, and he warns them not to become involved.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *God’s Angel Goes Before*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)