

Message Three

The Experiences of Marah and Elim

Scripture Reading: Exo. 15:22-27

- I. **“Then Moses moved Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore its name was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried out to Jehovah, and Jehovah showed him a tree; and he cast it into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He tested them. And He said, If you will listen carefully to the voice of Jehovah your God and do what is right in His eyes and give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I am Jehovah who heals you”—Exo. 15:22-26:**
- A. The children of Israel went three days in the wilderness and found no water; then they came to Marah, whose name means “bitterness,” because the waters of Marah were bitter and were not good for drinking.
- B. Three days signifies resurrection (Matt. 16:21; Acts 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:4); this indicates that it was in resurrection that the people of God were separated from Egypt:
1. Negatively, the wilderness signifies a place of wandering (Num. 14:33), but here it signifies, positively, a place of separation from the world.
 2. A journey of three days corresponds to baptism, which brings people out of the world through Christ’s death and into a wilderness, a realm of separation, in Christ’s resurrection—Rom. 6:3-5.
 3. In the realm of resurrection there is no natural water, no natural supply.
- C. The third day may be considered as the day of resurrection since the Lord Jesus was raised on the third day (1 Cor. 15:4); we may say that the tree is the resurrected Christ because this tree was cast into the waters of Marah after the children of Israel had traveled three days in the wilderness:
1. If we would put the resurrected Christ into our bitterness, allowing the resurrected Christ to come into our situation, the bitter waters will become the sweet waters.
 2. The more we drink of the living water, the sweet water of the resurrected Christ, the more we are regulated; the statute and ordinance made at Marah may have been that there was to be no more murmuring or complaining—cf. Phil. 2:12-16.
 3. If we murmur all the time, we will be sick; murmuring opens the door to the enemy to bring in all kinds of diseases.
 4. If we are those who murmur and complain, we are the same as the Egyptians, the worldly people; in most worldly associations or societies, the people murmur, complain, and even fight with one another.
 5. If we have the resurrected Christ in our situation, our situation will be so sweet with the living water; then we will have a statute that we would never murmur, complain, or fight with one another.
 6. We should not have diseases or illnesses among us, because the resurrected Christ is our Healer; our statute and ordinance are to not complain, criticize, or murmur but to praise the Lord.

- D. In response to Moses' cry, the Lord showed him a tree; when Moses cast the tree into the bitter waters, the waters became sweet—Exo. 15:25:
1. In addition to signifying the resurrected Christ, the tree also signifies the cross of Christ, the crucified Christ, according to 1 Peter 2:24—"who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose bruise you were healed."
 2. The tree of life signifies the crucified (implied in the tree as a piece of wood—v. 24) and resurrected (implied in the life of God—John 11:25) Christ; thus, we may say that the tree that Moses cast into the bitter waters was the crucified and resurrected Christ as the tree of life.
 3. When we cry out to the Lord in prayer, He shows us a vision of the crucified Christ; we need to see a vision of the cross; seeing this vision, we apply the cross of Christ to our situation, and immediately the bitter waters become sweet.
 4. The tree that healed the bitter waters was the cross of Christ, the healing cross; just as Moses saw a vision of a tree and cast the tree into the bitter waters, we need to see a vision of the crucified Christ and apply the cross of Christ to our bitter situations.
 5. The experience of Christ's death in the realm of resurrection (Phil. 3:10) will cause our bitter situations to become sweet.
- E. We do not experience the bitter waters of Marah once for all; as long as we live on earth, we shall walk in the realm of resurrection, in newness of life (Rom. 6:4), and come to Marah again and again:
1. The experience of the children of Israel at Marah portrays a principle, not merely an incident; this principle is basic in our Christian life.
 2. As we walk in the realm of resurrection, we shall thirst, only to discover that there is no natural water to supply our need; only the waters of bitterness are available.
 3. Whenever we are in such a situation, we need to see the vision of the tree and then apply this tree to our circumstances; this tree will then heal our situation and change the bitter waters into sweet.
- F. The fact that Jehovah was their Healer indicates that the children of Israel were sick:
1. This signifies that not only the waters of our circumstances are sometimes bitter, but also we ourselves are bitter (i.e., sick) and in need of healing—Matt. 9:12.
 2. We are sick physically, psychologically, and also spiritually; there is bitterness in our body, soul, and spirit, and we need to apply the cross of Christ to every aspect of our being.
 3. As we experience the cross of Christ and live a crucified life, Christ's resurrection life becomes our healing power, and the Lord becomes our Healer; both in our circumstances and in our being, bitterness is changed into sweetness—cf. Isa. 53:4; Matt. 8:17; 9:12; 1 Pet. 2:24.
- G. God uses the experience of the cross to test us and expose us—Exo. 15:25:
1. Christ was crucified for our healing (Isa. 53:4; Matt. 8:17); if we would experience His healing, we need to be identified with His crucifixion.
 2. Every time we experience the healing tree of the crucified Christ cast into our circumstances, we spontaneously realize that something in our being needs to be healed.
 3. We may sense the need for healing in the mind, or realize that our will needs to be adjusted, or see that our emotion needs to be balanced; at other times we may become conscious that our spirit is bitter toward others and needs to be healed.

4. The only way to be touched by the cross is to see the vision of the tree and to cast this tree into the very place that needs to be healed; we need to be identified with the crucifixion of Christ by applying His cross to every part of our being that is bitter and sick; then those parts will be healed.
5. Real healing takes place as we receive the dealing of the cross; we are healed when we are subdued and when we hearken to the voice of God, listen to His statutes, and obey His commandments; then Christ's resurrection life becomes our healing power, and the Lord becomes our Healer.

II. "And they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they encamped there by the waters"—Exo. 15:27:

- A. *Elim* means "mighty ones," "strong ones," or "great trees."
- B. Israel's experience at Elim is a picture of the experience of the resurrection life, which issues from the experience of the cross at Marah.
- C. At Elim there were twelve springs flowing and seventy palm trees growing:
 1. In the Bible a spring signifies life that flows out of God in resurrection into His chosen people (John 4:10, 14; 7:37-39; Rev. 22:1), and palm trees signify the victory of the evergreen life that is flourishing (Psa. 92:12), rejoicing in satisfaction (Lev. 23:40; Neh. 8:15), and victorious over tribulation (John 12:13; Rev. 7:9).
 2. The number twelve signifies the mingling of divinity with humanity for the complete and perfect carrying out of God's administration eternally (see 21:12, footnote 2; v. 13, footnote 1; and 22:2, footnote 4).
 3. Seventy equals seven times ten; the number seven signifies completion and perfection in God's dispensational move (see 2:29, footnote 1), and the number ten signifies fullness (see v. 10, footnote 2); hence, the number seventy signifies completion and perfection temporally for God's dispensational move in full.
 4. Thus, the twelve springs at Elim signify God as living water flowing into His chosen people to be mingled with them for the accomplishing of His eternal administration, and the seventy palm trees signify God as life growing in His people to carry out His administration dispensationally to express the riches of the divine life and its victory.
 5. When used together, the numbers twelve and seventy signify that God's people are to carry out His ministry (Exo. 24:1, 4; Luke 9:1; 10:1) by the flowing life signified by the twelve springs and the growing life signified by the seventy palm trees.
- D. At the end of Exodus 15:27 we are told that the children of Israel "encamped there by the waters":
 1. The word *encamped* indicates that God's people had been formed into an army; the flowing and growing life supplies God's people as His army.
 2. At Elim God's people were full of the enjoyment of life that made them qualified and equipped for fighting; this enabled them to fight to carry out God's purpose to build His habitation.
 3. The result of the flowing and growing life is an army strengthened to fight for God's purpose.
- E. In our experience the waters that have been changed from bitter to sweet must become the flowing waters in which, by which, and with which we grow like palm trees to express God's rich life and full victory for praising the Lord.