

Unlocking The Mystery & Treasure Of Our Inheritance

#30 From Victory To Life's Bitter Pool

8 Upcoming Events After Crossing The Red Sea Until Arriving At Elim

1. Ex. 15:1-21 They sang to the Lord. The song of Moses was an epic poem celebrating God's victory, lifting the hearts and voices of the people outward and upward.

Ex. 15:11, 21 Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

Andrew Bonar: "Let us be as watchful after the victory as before the battle."

It is possible to win the battle and yet lose the victory.

Life is a pilgrimage during which we must learn new lessons and fight new battles.

Expect Trials: We need challenging and new experiences to help us mature and glorify God.

Wiersbe: "Life is a school and the Lord knows just when to give you an examination."

The Israelites start the journey with a song of victory and praising God.

They are not prepared for what lay before them.

2. Ex. 15:22 They traveled 3 days journey Into The Wilderness of Shur and found no water.

Note: The passage through the Red Sea introduced them to the wilderness for the 1st time.

Key Point #1: 3 speaks of resurrection and completeness. We have a new life in Christ.

We are COMPLETE in Him as we begin our Christian journey [walk]. We are united with Him in His death and resurrection. As I apprehend the meaning of "a new creation in Christ Jesus," this world will become a dreary and desolate wilderness.

a. To the natural man, the world offers much that is attractive and alluring.

b. To the new man in Christ, all in it is "only vanity and vexation of spirit." It ministers to the "lust of the flesh, lust of the eye and pride of life," but there is nothing for the new nature.

c. For my spiritual life and growth, the world is simply a wilderness - barren and desolate.

Key Point #2 The wilderness is the place of travelers, journeying from one country to another.

a. Only a madman would think of making his home there.

b. This world is the place through which man journeys from time to eternity.

c. Faith makes the difference in the journey and the destination.

Most unbelievers are content to remain here and settle down as though they are to stay here forever. Ps. 49:11 "Their inward thought is, their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their land after their names."

d. The believer's home is not here. He looks "for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). Consequently, he is a stranger and pilgrim here (Heb. 11:13).

The "wilderness" speaks of our journey as a pilgrim.

e. Canaan was the country which God gave to Abraham and his seed. The wilderness was simply a strange land through which they passed on their way to their inheritance.

Consider: It is part of God's wise purpose that we should pass through the wilderness before we enter into our promised inheritance. Purposes of wilderness journey:

1. The trials and testing of the wilderness will reveal the evil of our hearts and manifest the incurable corruption of our flesh. This will humble us before God.

Spurgeon: The more holy a man becomes, the more conscious he is of unholiness.

2. We will prove by our experience that our entrance into our inheritance is solely a matter of God's sovereign grace.

3. Trials and testing are not "the end purpose of the Lord."

James 5:11 Ye have heard of THE PATIENCE OF JOB, and have seen the end of the Lord;

They are the occasions for fresh displays of the Father's long-suffering and goodness.

4. The wilderness will make manifest our weaknesses and our failures.

This will magnify the power and mercy of God who brings us into testing.

5. God's wants to exhibit in the trial: Him bearing with their failures and in supplying their need.

Deut. 8:1-4 All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger,

and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know;

that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that

proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.

6. The "wilderness" gives us a revelation of ourselves, and makes manifest the ways of God.

Key Point #3 Found No Water: The first lesson our wilderness-life is designed to teach us:

There is nothing on earth which can in any way minister to the life which we have received from Christ. The world will try to satisfy the longing in the heart. "The ONLY ONE who can satisfy

the human heart is the One who made it." If I am abiding in Christ I find absolutely nothing which will or can refresh my thirsty soul. The shallow cisterns of this world have run dry.

Ps. 63:1 "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee; my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is."

The believer's Resource: Just as I first embraced the words of the Savior,

"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink" [John 7:37]

I must now Continue To Go To Him who alone has the Water of Life.

3. They came to the waters of Marah but could not drink of them because they were bitter.

3 days - find no water - when they reached water - it is bitter! This is NOT what they expected from God! They were counting on Him to provide a smooth and easy path for them.

a. Real test: 3 days in the hot wilderness - the water is bitter

b. We often grasp at something we think will satisfy, only to find bitter disappointment.

You expected it to bring satisfaction, but it left you empty after the initial thrill.

c. Israelites were now made to feel the bareness and bitterness of the wilderness.

Lesson #2 We, too, enter the wilderness without understanding what it is!

We thought our gracious God would screen us from sorrow.

a. It is at God's right hand, and not in this world, that there are "pleasures for evermore."

b. Drought and bitterness are ALL we can expect in any place outside of abiding in Christ.

c. Many of our failings in the wilderness are attributed to our starting out with the wrong view of the wilderness.

d. We should start our Christian journey expecting trials and tribulation.

If we expect peace instead of persecution, we will continually groan and grow weary at not having OUR expectations realized. Disappointment will be our continual state.

4. 15:24 The People Murmured against Moses: "What shall we drink?"

Praising before the Red Sea gives place to complaining at Marah!

a. Once again they complain to Moses for bringing them into trouble.

b. They have overlooked the fact they had been led to Marah by the Pillar of Cloud (13:22)!

c. Every complaint against our circumstances, every grumble about the way people treat us, about the daily trials of life, is directed against that One Who "worketh all things after the counsel of His Own will" (Eph. 1:11).

d. Remember, what is recorded of Israel's history is "written for our admonition" (I Cor. 10:11).

e. There is the same evil heart of unbelief and rebellious will within us as were in the Israelites.

We need to earnestly seek His grace that the one may be subdued and the other broken.

f. What was the cause of their "murmuring?" Their eye was no longer upon God.

Consider: After the wonders of Jehovah's power which they had witnessed in Egypt, and their glorious deliverance at the Red Sea, it ought to have been unmistakably evident to them: God Was For And With Them In Every Situation.

5. Ex. 15:25a When Moses Cried Unto The Lord,

a. Moses did what Israel ought to have done—he took the matter to God in prayer.

b. This is what our "Marah's" are for—To DRIVE US To The Lord.

Consider: The tragic thing is that most of the time we are so under the influence of the flesh that we become absorbed with His blessings, rather than with the Blessor Himself.

It is sad, yet nevertheless true, that it takes a "Marah" to make us cry unto God in earnest.

Ps. 107:4-6, 12-13, 18-19, 27-28 "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them.

THEN they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses .

Therefore He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down, and there was none to help.

THEN they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses . . .

Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they drew near unto the gates of death,

THEN they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saveth them out of their distresses...

They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end.

THEN they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses."

Consider: This is so often true of you and me.

c. The cry unto God was not in vain.

d. The faith of Israel failed. Instead of trusting God to supply their need, they gave way to murmuring. Nevertheless, He came to their relief.

Ps. 103:10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

e. It was in response to the cries of an interceding mediator that God acted.

Moses is continually seen as the one who came between God and Israel.

f. Heb. 7:25 Thank God there is One who "ever lives to make intercession for us."

It is on this ground God deals tenderly with us as we pass through the wilderness.

I John 2:1 In any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous."

6. Ex. 15:25a The Lord showed him a tree. When he cast it into the bitter waters, they were made sweet.

a. The "tree" had evidently been there all the time, but Moses apparently did not see it or know of its sweetening properties.

b. God "showed him" the tree and he learned of the provision of God's grace.

c. This illustrates how dependent we must be upon the Lord due to how blind we are in ourselves.

d. Gen. 21:19 Of Hagar: "God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water."

Even in a dry and barren land, God's well can provide sustenance for your soul.

e. II Kings 6:17 "God opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

f. Prov. 20:12 "The hearing ear, and seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them."

Consider: The "tree" represents the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Several Scriptures present Jesus Christ under the figure of a "tree."

Ps. 1:3 He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth his fruit in His season, His leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever He doeth shall prosper."

Song of Solomon 2:3 "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste."

Lesson #3 Of Our Wilderness Life: Nothing can sweeten the bitter cup of our earthly experiences except resting under the shadow Of Jesus Christ. Abide in Him and you shall find His fruit "sweet" unto your taste and His words sweeter than honey.

Illustration in Acts 16: Paul and Silas in the prison of Philippi; they were cruelly scourged, and then thrown into the innermost dungeon. Behold them in the darkness, feet fast in the stocks, and backs bleeding. That was "Marah" for them. Their response: They "sang praises," and sang so lustily the other prisoners heard them (Acts 16:25). The "tree" was sweetening the bitter waters. How was it possible for them to sing under such circumstances? They rejoiced that they were "counted worthy to suffer shame for "His name" (Acts 5:41)!

Lesson #4 We are to regard our Christian trials and afflictions as opportunities for having fellowship with the sufferings of the Savior.

II Tim. 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him:

Rom. 8:17-18 And if we are [His] children, then we are [His] heirs also: heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ [sharing His inheritance with Him]; only we must share His suffering if we are to share His glory. [But what of that?] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time (this present life) are not worth being compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us *and* in us *and* for us *and* conferred on us!

II Cor. 4:17 For our light, momentary affliction (this slight distress of the passing hour) is ever more and more abundantly preparing and producing and achieving for us an everlasting weight of glory [beyond all measure, excessively surpassing all comparisons and all calculations, a vast and transcendent glory and blessedness never to cease!],

7. Ex. 15:25b-26 there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, God then promised: If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee. [Jehovah Rapha > another revelation of God]

Note: The context here: Nothing had been said to Israel about Jehovah's "statutes and commandments" while they were in Egypt. God is now dealing with them in His wondrous grace. Grace establishes on a higher basis what we fully OWE to Him as His redeemed. His commands and statutes are to be observed in our Christian walk.

a. God's words suggest there is a relationship between the plagues brought upon the Egyptians and the sweetening of the bitter waters.

b. The "bitter" waters of Marah were completely useless to the Israelites as was the "bloody" waters of the Nile to the Egyptians.

c. The Egyptians were plagued by God due to their failure to heed God's instruction: "Let My People Go."

d. When this command was disobeyed, the plagues ensued.

e. God is now laying down commands to the Israelites.

If they disregard His commands, they will be plagued just as the Egyptians were.

f. Their response to the bitter waters at Marah reveal: Israelites are sinful!

g. God's commands will be given to them to test them. To fail to obey invites His judgments.

8. Ex. 15:27 They came to Elim and camped there.

There were 12 wells of water and 70 palm trees. They camped there by the waters.

a. If life were nothing but tests, we would be discouraged.

b. If life were all pleasure, we would never learn discipline and develop character.

c. The Lord knows how to balance the experiences of life.

d. He brought His people to Elim where they found plenty of water and opportunity to rest.

e. Be grateful He gives us enough blessings to encourage us and enough burdens to humble us.

Elim is the complement to Marah.

1. The bitter waters of Marah sweetened by the tree.

2. The wells of pure water and the palm trees for shade and refreshment.

Lesson #5 When we are walking in fellowship with Christ and the principle of His cross is faithfully applied to my life daily, not only is the bitterness of suffering for His sake sweetened, but we enter into the pure joys which God has provided for His own.

"Elim" speaks of the satisfaction which God gives to those who are walking with Him in obedience. This joy of heart, this satisfaction of soul, comes to us through the ministry of the Word - hence the significance of the twelve "wells" and the seventy "palm trees"; the very numbers selected by Christ in the sending forth of His apostles. (See Luke 9:1; 10:1)

Wiersbe: "The school of life is preparation for an eternity with God.

The Lord tests us to encourage spiritual growth; the devil tempts us to encourage spiritual immaturity. The attitude we take toward our difficulties determines which direction life will go, for what life does to us depends on what life finds in us."

Lesson #6: God's plan for our lives: We learn to give Him glory in every situation in life.

If we are on the mountain, then praise Him for His blessings!

If we are in the valley, then praise Him for His faithfulness.

If we trust God and obey His Word, we'll pass the test and grow, but if in unbelief we complain and disobey Him, we'll fail the test and remain immature. [James 1:12-18; Heb. 12:1-11

The nourishment of the Word enables us to be faithful pilgrims and successful learners.

At Marah, God revealed Himself to Israel as "Jehovah-Rapha", or "The Lord Your Healer."

If Israel had never faced this bitter time, they would have never known this aspect of God's character.

Job would have never known God could restore him unless he first lost everything.

Mary and Martha would not have known that Jesus was the "Resurrection and the Life" unless they had first known grief.

The Lord uses the bitter episodes of life to reveal himself more fully to His children.

When we stand at the bitter waters of our Marah's, God helps us to know He is on His throne and He is in control. God helps us to look for His hand and His waiting provision.

When you take the "witches brew" of your life, with all of its goods and bads,

and cast Jesus into the experience, it all straightens out! He can make sense of any mess.

The key is learning not to kick, but to rest in His power and to allow Him to have His way in your life. Is there a bitter pool in your life that needs to be brought to Jesus?