

Sent: Wednesday, January 6, 2021 10:43 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Exodus 15:22-27

"But whoever drinks of the water that I give him shall never thirst; but the water that I give him will become to him a well of water springing up to eternal life! (John 4:14)

Happy New Year, men! As we look back to 2020 and where we've been in our study of Exodus, we can see God, our sovereign God, working out His redemptive plan through the ages, and "leading His dear children along"!

Exodus, you'll remember, begins with "the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt...with their households," as a result of a famine in the land of Canaan, not realizing that God, in His sovereignty--and as part of His great "redemptive plan"--had "orchestrated" it all, causing their brother, Joseph (whom they had "sold" and presumed was "dead," but whom God had "sent" and "saved"), to gain great favor with Pharaoh, resulting in the founding of a "people of God" who would become "fruitful and mighty"! Here's how it went from there:

- After Joseph died, a new Pharaoh arose in Egypt, who didn't know Joseph and--feeling threatened by their rising influence--placed them in bondage, and even decreed that all their newborn sons be killed! One such a one, who should have died, turned out to be Moses, a son of the house of Levi. who was rescued from a basket among the reeds of the Nile River by (Ironically) Pharaoh's daughter, and "raised" in Pharaoh's court!
- This same Moses would later have to flee from Egypt after killing an Egyptian he saw abusing one of his "Hebrew brothers"--and spend 40 years pasturing sheep in far-off Median, before God appeared to him, in a "burning bush" (of all things!), and called him to go back to Egypt and bring out the "children of Israel" from Egypt to the land of Canaan, the land promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! (Interestingly, God had told Abraham, in Genesis 15:13, that his descendants "would be strangers in a land that was not theirs, where they would be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years...but come back with many possessions..." to the land of Canaan!)
- And so, "after much a-do," Moses, along with Aaron, stood before Pharaoh and, speaking for God, asked him to "let My people go"! Which only happened after God sent a series of 10 plagues, the last one being the death of all the first-born of the Egyptians, on the fateful night of the "Passover"!
- The children of Israel then made their great "exodus" from the land of Egypt, taking with them the "bones of Joseph" (which Joseph, some 360 years earlier had made his brothers swear to do), along with an abundance of riches, after "the LORD gave them favor with the Egyptians"!
- And so, according to Exodus 12:37-14:12, all two million or so of them made their way from Rameses (and the land of Goshen) to Succoth, "by way of the wilderness (led by God in a "pillar of cloud by day and pillar of cloud by night") to the Red Sea--where they appeared trapped by the advancing chariots of Pharaoh's army!
- But then God "sent a strong east wind" and miraculously opened up the waters of the Red Sea so that all the children of Israel walked through on dry land--then returning the waters to their natural state and drowning the Egyptian forces who were pursuing them!
- And so, Exodus 14:30-31 says, "Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians! And when Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses!"

As you might remember, we ended our study for 2020 with our last lesson for the year on December 15th (on Exodus 15:1-21)--literally on "a high note"--with Moses and Miriam leading the children of Israel in a song of praise to the LORD, after He delivered them, miraculously, from bondage in Egypt, and safely through the Red Sea! And with Christmas coming, what better way for us as "Men of the Bible ("MOBsters") to end our year together than by singing our own song of praise: "Joy to the World, the Lord is Come...!"

So, last nite, we welcomed in the new year--and our first lesson for 2021, from Exodus 15:22-29--which we debated how to "title"! It could appropriately be titled as a "time of testing" for the children of Israel! Or the "First Test" for the children of Israel in the wilderness! Or a "teaching moment"! Or the "bitter waters of Marah"! Or "Something bitter, something sweet"! Or, how bout, "God Leads His Dear Children Along"!

Well, you know what happened in Exodus 15:22-27! The children of Israel were "led" by the LORD (by the "cloud by day" and "fire by night") for three days into the wilderness of Shur, but "found no water"! And when they came to Marah (appropriately meaning "bitter"), they found it! Water! Yea! But it turned out to be "bitter" and undrinkable! And so, verse 24 says, "they grumbled to Moses" (how can you blame them?)--and Moses "cried to the LORD (what else could he do?), and the LORD "sweetened" the waters! Turning something bitter into something sweet (as only God can do)! Wow!

You can easily blame the people for "failed faith," and not "fully trusting" the LORD at this point, theologically speaking, which is how all the commentaries generally pitch it! After all, as Constable notes, they had just watched the LORD part the waters of the Red Sea for them to walk through--and God was actually there for them, leading them by that pillar of cloud by day and pillar of cloud by night! And yet, they doubted whether that same God could provide them with water to drink!

"Shepherd's Notes" notes that this was the "first real test" for the children of Israel in the wilderness (a test which they "failed"!)--and "had they just continued moving forward, believing that God would provide, they would have come to Elim (which they eventually did!) where there was an abundance of water--in fact, "twelve springs of water, and seventy date palm trees"! Wow! Springs of water! How "sweet" the water must have tasted--in the dry and barren land!

Would any of us have responded differently, going for three days without water? We'd like to think so! But ever been to Marah? I'm sure you have, in one way or another, and that you can probably relate with this story!

Speaking of Marah! There's a great story in the Book of Ruth--where Naomi experienced her Marah! She and her husband, "a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah" named Elimelech (interesting to see "Elim" in his name, and his full name actually meaning "my God is king!"), along with their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, left Bethlehem--because of a famine in the land (all this starting to sound familiar?)--and went down to the land of Moab (down toward Egypt). There, their sons married Moabite woman, Orpah and Ruth--and then, one day, Elimelech died! And then, the two sons died! Wow! And Naomi was left with her two daughters-in-law! But the story doesn't end there! She decided to go back to Bethlehem when she heard that the famine

had passed. And as they were "on their way" she encouraged Orpah and Ruth to return to their families in Moab! So Orpah agreed and "kissed her mother-in-law goodbye," but Ruth "clung" to Naomi, responding with the memorable words: "Where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God!" Then it was back in Bethlehem, later, where she requested that people who recognized her as "Naomi" no longer call her "Marah"! in Ruth 1:20-21: "Do not call me Naomi; call me Marah, for the Almighty has dealt with me very bitterly! I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty! Why do you call me Naomi since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

You know the rest of the story! How Naomi had a "kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz"--and how, to make a long story short, Boaz and Ruth were married and had a son named Obed (whom Naomi nursed), who in turn had a son named Jesse, who had a son named David--all in the line of Jesus, born many years later, in a manger, in the little town of Bethlehem! And the rest is history! (You might want to read about it more fully, in the Book of Ruth, together with your family as a great way to be encouraged as you start of the new year!)

God has a way of turning something bitter into something sweet! (Have you noticed? Experienced?)

Well, back to our text in Exodus!

God also gave the children of Israel a promise--at Marah! In the "wilderness"! It was "conditional"! God said, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and (if) you do what is right in His sight, and (if) you give ear to His commandments, and (if) you keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases on you which I put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD (Jehovah Rapha), am your healer"! But the story gets better! And this is how it ends! "Then they came to Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they camped there beside the waters"! And all is well, right? (It's even better news that Jesus would one day offer a Samaritan woman at a well--"Jacob's well" it turns out--"living water"! Water "springing up to eternal life"! That Jesus would one day make available for all people!

But getting back to the LORD's promise--would the children of Israel from here on actually "give heed to the voice of the LORD their God," and always "do what is right in His sight," and "keep His commandments" (which are yet to be explicitly given on Mt. Sinai), and all the above? Would that be possible for anyone? A fallen man? And would they (the children of Israel) thus live free from "all those diseases"--and plagues--including the ones God "inflicted on the Egyptians"? At least through their days of wandering through the wilderness? Well, we have a clue to the answer! And it's obviously "no way"! Why else, as Paul Logan noted last night, would God remind them that He is Jehovah Rapha, the "Healer," if they wouldn't need "healing," and a "Savior")?

And, speaking of diseases, and especially the coronavirus, which is devastating our world today! Is God really in control of it all, and somehow using it, in His sovereign way, maybe to "test" his own people (like us), or to "judge" the people of the world for evil? Maybe turn them to Him?

Or is it all simply the result of living in a fallen world? Well, we know, for sure, that God is in control of the affairs of our world--just as He was "overseeing" the children of Israel on their journey to Marah, and then to Elim--and that He can, and will, intervene as He wills! In II Chronicles 7:13-14, God said to Solomon: "If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and (If) My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land"!

Just as God demonstrated to children of Israel at Marah and Elim, God is able to turn something bitter into something good! And the "curse" of sin into the "blessing" of salvation! And, for His children--just like for the children of Israel--growth in faith, and "knowing" that our sovereign God is in control over all that's happening in our world (including the virus!) and that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose"!

God leads His dear children along! (You can even sing about it!)

Lowell