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Water in the Wilderness

Exodus 15:23-27

1. No Water at Shur

1. The wilderness:

Etham (Ex. 13:20) means "gravel"; Shur (Ex. 15:22) means "a rampart" or a place of observation. What is the wilderness? It is a place marked by a poverty of resources and where there is virtually no place to hide. So the wilderness was a test on two counts: it revealed to Israel the sufficiency of God when we only have Him. It also revealed what was in Israel's heart. There God "proved" Israel at Marah and Meribah.

2. The journey: three days. Had passed through death, burial, and resurrection in a figure. Now learn it practically. God seeks to bring us into conformity with new position: dead to sin, Rom. 6:7,14; to law, Rom. 7:6, margin; to world (Gal. 6:14).

3. The trial: no water (15:22). "Every spring of earth is dried up for those who have been redeemed from Egypt."

2. Bitter Water at Marah

1. Marah means "bitter"

(15:23). This is the same word as Miriam, or Mary. See Ruth 1:20. This was probably ground water made bitter by the Red Sea. Israel was brought dry shod through the sea; they are now made to drink of it. Such is the offense of the cross (Gal. 5:11).

2. Murmuring (15:24).

Why was there nothing like this in Egypt? Although directed to Moses, it was really against the Lord.

3. Sweet Water

1. The Tree. Fellowship with Christ in sufferings of the cross. (See Phil. 3:10). Note that it was:

- a. Pointed out by the Lord (v. 25). This solution was not man's idea.
- b. Cast into the waters (v. 25), i.e., applied directly to the source of the problem.
- c. The waters were made sweet (v. 25). So the Lord provides "exceeding abundantly above" our need (Eph. 3:20). In the bitter experiences of life we are tempted to question the love of God and murmur against Him. It is then He shows us the Tree and by it how much He loves us.

2. The Healer. He who healed the waters is also the Healer of His people.

- a. Separation from Egypt. "Diligently hearken," etc. (v. 26).
- b. The diseases of Egypt. "I will put none of these diseases" (v. 26).

4. Wells of Water at Elim

At Elim, God provided for the consolation of His people--shelter, rest, shade (15:27).

1. Twelve wells of water.

The number twelve suggests the ideas of administration and government. Recall there were twelve tribes (Gen.

49:28), twelve apostles (Mt. 10:2-5, 1 Cor. 4:9, Rev. 21:14), and twelve thrones (Mt. 19:28).

2. The seventy palm trees might suggest the fullness of this ministry (see also Lk. 10:1-17).