

Message Seven

The Experiences of Marah and Elim

EM Hymns 477, 482

Scripture Reading: Exo. 15:22-27

- Exo 15:22 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.
- Exo 15:23 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.
- Exo 15:24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?
- Exo 15:25 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.
- Exo 15:26 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 15:27 And they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they encamped there by the waters.

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:

Matt 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.

Acts 10:40 This One, God raised on the third day; and He has made Him manifest,

1 Cor 15:4 And that He was buried, and that He has been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures;

1. Negatively, the wilderness signifies a place of wandering (Num. 14:33), but here it signifies, positively, a place of separation from the world.

Num 14:33 And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and they shall suffer for your unfaithfulness until your corpses have been consumed in the wilderness.

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.

Rom 6:3 Or are you ignorant that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

Rom 6:4 We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life.

Rom 6:5 For if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection,

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 Cor 15:4 And that He was buried, and that He has been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures;

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.

Phil 2:12 So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

Phil 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.

Phil 2:14 Do all things without murmurings and reasonings

Phil 2:15 That you may be blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as luminaries in the world,

Phil 2:16 Holding forth the word of life, so that I may have a boast in the day of Christ that I did not run in vain nor labor in vain.

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:

Exo 15:25 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.

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.

1 Pet 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.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;

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.

Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

- 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:

Rom 6:4 We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life.

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.

Matt 9:12 Now when He heard this, He said, Those who are strong have no need of a physician, but those who are ill.

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.

Isa 53:4 Surely He has borne our sicknesses, / And carried our sorrows; / Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, / Smitten of God and afflicted.

Matt 8:17 So that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "He Himself took away our infirmities and bore our diseases."

Matt 9:12 Now when He heard this, He said, Those who are strong have no need of a physician, but those who are ill.

1 Pet 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.

- G. God uses the experience of the cross to test us and expose us—Exo. 15:25:

Exo 15:25 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.

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.

Isa 53:4 Surely He has borne our sicknesses, / And carried our sorrows; / Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, / Smitten of God and afflicted.

Matt 8:17 So that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "He Himself took away our infirmities and bore our diseases."

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).

John 4:10	Jesus answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.
John 4:14	But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water springing up into eternal life.
John 7:37	Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.
John 7:38	He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.
John 7:39	But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.
Rev 22:1	And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.
Psa 92:12 Lev 23:40	The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree; / He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. And on the first day you shall take for yourselves the product of stately trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before Jehovah your God for seven days.
Neh 8:15	And that they publish and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, Go out to the mountain and bring olive branches and wild olive branches and myrtle branches and palm branches and branches of other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.
John 12:13	Took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out, Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!
Rev 7:9	After these things I saw, and behold, there was a great multitude which no one could number, out of every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palm branches in their hands.

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).

Rev 21:12 Note 2	The gates are for communication, for coming in and going out. Twelve is the number of absolute perfection and eternal completion in God’s administration. Hence, twelve gates indicates that the communication in the New Jerusalem is absolutely perfect and eternally complete for God’s administration..
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Rev 21:13	On the ¹ east three gates, and on the ¹ north three gates, and on the ¹ south three gates, and on the ¹ west three gates.
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Note 1	The city lies square (v. 16), with three gates on each of the four sides. The east side, at the front, toward the glory of the sunrise, ranks first; the north side, at the top, ranks second; the south side, at the bottom, ranks third; and the west side, at the rear, ranks fourth. The gates on the four sides face the four directions of the earth, signifying that the entrance into the holy city is available to all the peoples on earth. (Cf. the four heads of the river in Gen. 2:10-14.) That there are three gates on each side signifies that the three of the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—work together to bring people into the holy city. This is indicated in the three parables in Luke 15 and implied in the Lord’s word in Matt. 28:19. To be baptized into the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is the real entrance into the holy city. That there are three gates on each of the four sides,
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- three times four being twelve, also implies that the Triune God is mingled with man, the creature. (The number four signifies the creatures—4:6.)
- Rev 22:2** And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each ⁴month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.
- Note 4** Month indicates that in the new heaven and new earth the moon still will be there to divide the twelve months. The sun also will be there to separate day and night into periods of twelve hours each. While the number that represents the church is seven, signifying that God in His present dispensation is added to His creature, man, the number that represents the New Jerusalem is twelve, signifying that God in His eternal administration is mingled with His creature, man. In the New Jerusalem are the twelve foundations, inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles; the twelve gates, which are twelve pearls, inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes; and the twelve fruits of the tree of life. With regard to space, the city proper is twelve thousand stadia, one thousand times twelve, in each of its three dimensions, and its wall is one hundred forty-four cubits, twelve times twelve, in height. With regard to time, in the new heaven and new earth there are twelve months yearly, twelve hours daily, and twelve hours nightly.
- 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.
- Rev 2:29 Note 1** The number seven in the Bible is composed either of six plus one, e.g., six days plus one day equals one week; or of three plus four, as in these two chapters, in which the seven churches are divided into one group of three and another group of four. At the end of each of the first three epistles, the ear for hearing is mentioned first, and then the call for overcoming. At the end of each of the last four epistles, the order is reversed. This proves that the first three epistles form one group, and the last four another. Six plus one is seen in God's creation, whereas three plus four is seen in God's new creation, the church. Since all things were created in six days, the number six signifies the creation, especially man, who was created on the sixth day; and since the seventh day, as the conclusion of the six days, was the one day of God's rest, the number one signifies the unique Creator. Hence, six plus one signifies that all things were created unto God for the accomplishing of His purpose. The unique Creator, God, is triune, signified by the number three. Since the creation is represented before God by four living creatures (**4:6-9**), the number four signifies the creatures, especially man. Hence, three plus four means that God is added to the created man, and thus His purpose is being accomplished. The church is not only the creature but the creature with the Creator as the Triune God dispensed into her. She is the real number seven: the real three, the Triune God, added to the real four, created man. Therefore, the number seven denotes completion in God's move, first in the old creation and then in the new creation, the church.
- Rev 2:10 Note 2** The number ten signifies fullness; e.g., the ten commandments, which express God's demand in full. Ten days signifies a period of time that is full, yet brief (**Gen. 24:55; Jer. 42:7; Dan. 1:12-14**). Here it signifies that the affliction of the suffering church was full, yet short-lived. As a sign, the ten days here indicate prophetically the ten periods of persecution that the church suffered under the Roman emperors, beginning with Caesar Nero in the second half of the first century and ending with Constantine the Great in the first part of the fourth century. However severe were the persecutions instigated by the devil, Satan, through the Roman Caesars, who did their utmost to destroy and eliminate the church, they could not subdue and terminate the church. History demonstrates that the church of the living Christ, who became dead and lived again, withstood the persecutions victoriously and multiplied flourishly by the indestructible resurrection life.
- 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.
- Exo 24:1** Then He said to Moses, Come up to Jehovah, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship at a distance.

- Exo 24:4 And Moses wrote down all the words of Jehovah. And he rose up early in the morning and built an altar at the base of the mountain and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Luke 9:1 And He called together the twelve and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases.
- Luke 10:1 Now after these things, the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to come.

- D. At the end of Exodus 15:27 we are told that the children of Israel “encamped there by the waters”:
- Exo 15:27 And they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they 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.