

Lesson 9 25th March, 2018

A Table in the Wilderness

Lesson Scope: [Exodus 15:22-16:36](#)

References in brackets refer to Lesson Scope unless noted otherwise

Lesson Focus

God could have led His people by an easier route. He could have provided lush pasture and blue skies with all kinds of pleasantries. But God chose to lead Israel through the Red Sea and then "through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, and where there was no water." God designed these times of crisis for the eternal good of His people. It was in these times of crisis that God proved Himself able to meet Israel's need. It was also these times of crisis that forced Israel to choose to call out to God in faith or respond in unbelief by complaining and faultfinding.

God's people face many tests of their faith. Regardless of life's difficulties, they can always find their sustenance and victory in Him.

Men are dependent upon the aid of God Almighty. Though sometimes they fail in gratitude, God is gracious in providing for His people.

Read the entire lesson scope. This lesson should focus on what God provides, and the grace we can receive to use these blessings. But you should spend some time looking at man's response to what God gives. It is native to human nature to look at our trouble and complain. This lesson should inspire thankfulness and praise to God. Do not focus on how wrong Israel was to murmur; rather think of how we should respond to similar circumstances.

Lesson Aim: To portray the richness of God's grace in the midst of a barren world.

Theme Verses: [Deuteronomy 32:9-10](#) For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

Lesson Text

The Sweetened Waters

Exodus 15:22-26 Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. ²³ When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. ²⁴ And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” ²⁵ And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the LORD made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, ²⁶ saying, “If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which 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 that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer.”

The Bountiful Supply

Exodus 15:27 Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.

The Heavenly Bread

Exodus 16:3-4 And the people of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” ⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.

Exodus 16:11-21 And the LORD said to Moses, ¹² “I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’” ¹³ In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. ¹⁴ And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵ When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You

shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.”¹⁷ And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less.¹⁸ But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat.¹⁹ And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over till the morning.”²⁰ But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them.²¹ Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

Questions for Study

The Sweetened Waters

1. God is good, so why did Israel need to travel three days without water, and then find only bitter water at Marah?
2. What makes murmuring sin?
3. How do the statutes and ordinances of God relate to the blessing?
4. What are some provisions that God has given us to sweeten life's bitter experiences?

The Bountiful Supply

5. What blessings did Israel find at Elim?
6. What are some blessings we have that refresh us in our Christian walk?

The Heavenly Bread

7. In what way did Israel pass the test in the wilderness of Sin? In what way did they fail?
8. What is the Christian's bread from heaven?

Analyzing the Passage

March in 15:23 is the Hebrew word bitterness. This place was named bitterness because of the condition of the water.

The statute and ordinance found in 15:25 was divine law and was coupled with a blessing.

The clause in 15:25 "there he proved them" indicates that God tested Israel at March, and 16:4 says that God gave them manna and commanded them to gather a limited amount every day so He could prove them in the wilderness of Sin.

The name manna, as Israel called the "small round thing" that God gave them to eat, came from the question "What is it?" It was like asking the question "What is it?" every time they said the name.

In 16:12 God heard Israel complain about His provisions, and it displeased Him, but He still provided the food that they needed.

Principles and Applications

The Sweetened Waters

1. God provides able leaders for His people (15:22). Moses "cried unto the LORD," exemplifying a godly pattern for dealing with difficulty. Like Moses, able men lead their people to God, who can supply their needs and heal their infirmities. Wise men recognize godly leaders and follow them as they follow Christ.

2. God hears the cry of need from the midst of a barren world (15:25). God knows the needs of mankind, but He desires for them to cry out to Him in time of trouble, so that He can lead them. Often these times of difficulty are designed by God, to prove His people or to lead men to Himself.

3. God graciously provides the resources so that man can cope with life's bitter experiences (15:25). Bitter experiences are a part of life and hold the potential to make us bitter or to enrich our lives and cause us to grow more in the likeness of Jesus. When we crucify our will, the bitter experiences of life can mature us and sweeten our character.

4. The statutes and ordinances of God are an act of His grace (15:26). The bitter water was made sweet when Moses took the tree that God had showed him and applied it to the water. Obedience and surrender to the plan of God brought healing, not the properties of the tree. God will heal our bitter experience when we crucify the flesh and apply God's provisions to our life. When Joseph was sold into Egypt, his life was bitter, but his faith in God sweetened his life and made him a blessing to many.

5. God provides a haven of protection for His people in the midst of a barren world (15:26). God promised that He would not afflict Israel with the diseases that afflicted the Egyptians if Israel would obey Him. The closer we walk to God, the less He needs to chastise us so we are not condemned with the wicked. But there are times the Lord allows difficulty, as in the case of Job, to glorify His own Name.

The Bountiful Supply

6. The abundance that God is able to provide is beyond what man can ask or think (15:27). Just as God provided the palm trees and abundant water at Elim, so God provides intervals for rest and spiritual refreshment through life. By faith we can glimpse the greatness of our God's resources in the midst of life's seemingly endless desert.

The Heavenly Bread

7. At times God allows man to face desperate need so He can show Himself strong on his behalf (16:3). When man looks only at his circumstances and forgets the resources of Almighty God, the situations of life can soon become desperate. It is natural for him to complain and blame his fellow men for circumstances that he faces. If man in need would cry out to God for help, God would respond with strength to supply all his need.

8. God's resources are unlimited in meeting man's need (16:4). God sent manna enough so that everyone had all that he needed and more besides. When the sun came out, it melted the extra. Faithfully God sent manna six days a week. For forty years Israel had only enough food for each day. But God never failed them. God never fails us. He always has more than enough to meet our needs.

9. Man needs to appropriate God's gracious provisions (16:16-18). God sent manna, but Israel needed to go out and gather it. God gives us the resources to supply our needs, but we need to receive them and use them. God will give us peace and joy, but first we must crucify self, resist the devil, and draw near to God. God will be a Father to us, but we must first come out from the world and refuse to touch the unclean thing.

10. God tailors His provision to meet individual needs (16:17-18). God gives us help to think soberly about ourselves, according to the amount of faith we possess (Romans 12:3). He gives us power to perform the gift He gives us (Ephesians 4:7). God does not give us grace today for tomorrow's trials, but instead He gives us grace not to worry about tomorrow.

11. Man needs to daily refresh himself with God's provisions (16:21). The man of God daily renews his relationship with God, with surrender to God, with Bible reading, and with prayer. Our spiritual life will fade and die if it is not maintained. If we try to keep alive on yesterday's re-

lationship, it will suffer as well. A fresh supply is available every day.

Important Teachings

1. God provides able leaders for His people (15:22).
2. God hears the cry of need from the midst of a barren world (15:25).
3. God graciously provides the resources so that man can cope with life's bitter experiences (15:25).
4. The statutes and ordinances of God are an act of His grace (15:26).
5. God provides a haven of protection for His people in the midst of a barren world (15:26).
6. The abundance that God is able to provide is beyond what man can ask or think (15:27).
7. At times God allows man to face desperate need so He can show Himself strong on his behalf (16:3).
8. God's resources are unlimited in meeting man's need (16:4).
9. Man needs to appropriate God's gracious provisions (16:16-18).
10. God tailors His provision to meet individual needs (16:17-18).
11. Man needs to daily refresh himself with God's provisions (16:21).

Answers to Questions

1. God is good, so why did Israel need to travel three days without water, and then find only bitter water at Marah?

God was testing them to see if they would recognize Him as the Giver and Sustainer of life. Instead of murmuring, God would have had them use these experiences as faith builders.

2. What makes murmuring sin?

Murmuring is sin because it is unthankfulness. See 2 Timothy 3:2. Murmuring is sin because it is against God (16:7).

3. How do the statutes and ordinances of God relate to the blessing? God's statutes and ordinances contain a blessing for obedience, so we reap a blessing for obedience, and reap judgment for disobedience.

4. What are some provisions that God has given us to sweeten life's bitter experiences?

We can bring our cares to God in prayer and receive rest and peace. Faith in God is a blessing even when we do not know how things will work out. We have God's Word to give us direction and a faithful brotherhood to share our burdens and give guidance.

5. What blessings did Israel find at Elim?

They found an abundant supply of refreshing water and shade. The cloud stopped and they rested.

6. What are some blessings we have that refresh us in our Christian walk?

Times of reading and studying the Word are refreshing. Church meetings where the Word of God is taught and times of fellowship with Christian friends are times of refreshment for the child of God.

7. In what way did Israel pass the test in the wilderness of Sin? In what way did they fail?

Those who obeyed and gathered their allotted amount five days and double on the day before the Sabbath passed the test.

Those who did not follow God's instructions failed the test.

8. What is the Christian's bread from heaven?

Jesus said He is the Bread of Life. The words of Scripture are also bread from heaven (John 6:31-35, 48-58).

Summarizing the Lesson

"Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: ... Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end" (Deuteronomy 8:11, 14-16).

Research Guide

Read Psalms 78, 105, 106; and John 6:31-35.