

## What's the Message – Lesson 26

### STANDARD OPENING

#### New Text

Today our study begins with the last verses of Chapter 15 of Exodus and focuses on the early lessons in the desert.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. It is our prayer that the Lord will use this study to help you realize that as Israel needed to re-learn fundamental elements of their relationship with God, so we, too, need to refresh our memories daily. Amen.

Last time we saw Moses teaching the Israelites that when things look the most hopeless, that's when they should really put their trust and confidence in God. And God delivered them out of the hand of the mighty Egyptian army just as He had promised. Now we turn to what happened next.

Beginning at Exodus chapter 14, verse 22, we see that they went out into the wilderness and ran out of water. Then the water that they did find was undrinkable. And so they did exactly what you and I would have done; they complained.

Later, as they moved on further, they got hungry. So they complained some more, and said to Moses: Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

And another time, after they had camped at Rephidim, they found no water. Beginning with chapter 17, verse 2, we read: Therefore the people found fault with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses answered them, "Why do you find fault with me? Why do you put the Lord to the proof?"

But the people thirsted there for water, and the people murmured against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?"

So Moses cried to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me."

Here are the first three examples of the Israelites dealing with some of the most basic of human needs, water to drink and food to eat. We can relate to these situations only in a small way, for these are rare occurrences in our lives. But we can imagine that we would not have reacted much differently. Even so, Teacher, what do these examples teach us? What is the message we should see here for our lives today?

First, notice how God dealt with each of these situations. Did He turn His back on them, and essentially say “tough; work it out yourself?” No. Quite the opposite. He showed these undeserving people His grace and mercy, and stepped in with miraculous means to save them repeatedly.

In Exodus chapter 15, verse 25, where the Israelites were faced with bitter water . . . the Marah water . . . when Moses cried to the Lord for help, He showed Moses a tree that was to be thrown in the water to make it sweet and drinkable. In chapter 16, when they became hungry, the Lord said He would “rain down bread from heaven” . . . manna . . . for them. Then He gave specific instructions on how to be good stewards of this bread of life. For five days they were only to gather as much as would be needed for that one day.

They were not to try and hoard, but trust that tomorrow God would provide again what they needed. On the sixth day they were to gather enough for two days, and it would keep over through the Sabbath, for on the Sabbath they were to rest and do no work, and no manna would fall.

In the example you referred to earlier, when they begged for water at Rephidim, in chapter 17, verse 5, God told Moses: Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand the rod with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, that the people may drink.

Do we gripe and complain when we don't get what we want? And don't we want it resolved right away . . . instant gratification? Just like us, Israel had to learn to trust in God, especially when the situation looked hopeless. Would we believe that a rock would supply us with water? Moses did, and obeyed God's command. It's not so much that we are like Israel, but that the Israelites are so much like us, and we both need God's love and forgiveness. The story may be ancient, but the lesson is timeless. And it's a lesson we still need to learn today.

Next time we shall take a fresh look at God's Law given at Sinai.