

FEBRUARY 2

Exodus 15:19-17:7

Exodus 15:19-27

Vs. 19-21 This section finishes off Moses' song from yesterday. It's sort of a grizzly picture. Meet Moses' sister, Miriam, leading the girls, singing on the banks of the Red Sea as the bodies of dead soldiers lap upon the shore. You definitely "had to be there" to appreciate the moment. It was a very class "A" miracle and deliverance. It is interesting to think of Miriam out there shaking a tambourine at 90, or thereabouts.

Vs. 22-27 This deliverance makes the next portion harder to grasp, but important to note. If God wanted to kill the people, He had the chance, but it is obvious that He wants to save them. Now, they have to go three days without water, and when they find it, it's undrinkable.

When we read "people," we have to realize this is a large city of people. If they had 600,000 men, then they had as many, if not more, women. Then, since they were a hearty and procreative people, what - 3.1 kids per family? We're talking 2-3 million people. Some people speculate that there may have been up to 6 million people. This is a lot of people to be thirsty and complaining. It also means that on the surface, their need for water is "impossible" to meet.

Note that their "need" overwhelms the miracle and deliverance at the sea. It blinds them to the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. This is a good lesson in why God allows us to have hard times and allows things to move slowly at times. The building of our faith, faith that goes above our needs and circumstances, that lifts us out of ourselves to live for "reality," is not an easy task. As disciples, it is very easy to forget, in the present distress, the wonder of God's grace we rejoiced in yesterday.

Notice that God allowed the need to grow....3 days, and then took care of the problem. The deliverance and miracle were magnified by the depth of need.

Notice, and you'll see this over and over, that instead of crying out to God, they go after Moses and bitterly blame him.

So, while they are enjoying this deliverance and drinking the water, God made a deal with them that seems like a "no-brainer." If they will do what He says, He'll take care of them. They have seen all sorts of stuff, miracles, water, and they have "their daily pillar of cloud/fire." Of course they will obey and rest in Him and listen to Him and take all of their needs to Him, right? Wrong.

Just a reminder for us disciples, it is hard to find seasoned, proven workers in Christ who do not fold under after a few weeks or months of personal need. That's why the process mentioned in Romans 5:1-5 is so important. What is also important is living before the Lord, meeting with Him daily. Past experience, just like food eaten last week, doesn't give us hope and strength today. Also, staying in the harvest is important. This is reality and the mission of God, and it keeps us from sinking into ourselves and our needs.

Exodus 16

Note that there are two important things established here.

Vs. 1-21 First, they were given the manna, a daily miracle. Two to three million people needed more to eat than the cattle they brought out of Egypt. I'm sure for the "far thinking" people in Israel this journey seemed suicidal. Where would you get that much food, every day? God did it for 40 years and didn't even break a sweat. It was the daily miracle that saved them, the fact that they gathered daily, that they took for granted, and one generation grew to despise. For the disciple, there are lessons to be learned in all of this about our hearts and the power of sin. Notice

their words in v. 3. Cool! Read what Paul says about this generation of people in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 and how this account is meant to help us.

God occasionally gave them meat, but manna was the norm. Think also about what it says in The Lord's Prayer, *Give us each day our daily bread*. Also, in John 6, Jesus says He is the bread that comes down from heaven.

Vs. 22-30 Second, they were given the Sabbath. This was God's provision for them to rest and allow God to care for them. On the sixth day God would provide twice as much. They were to rely on God and not work to care for their lives. They could do good, help others, walk, talk, eat, but not work in order to store up stuff or take care of life. This is hard for someone in the affluent western world to grasp, that if you didn't work a day in that culture, you might not have anything to eat that night or the next day. We have Wal-Mart; they had their hands. God was giving them a weekly, cultural, personal reminder that He cared for them; and that, in reality, He, not they, sustained their lives.

Vs. 31-36 This was a memorial to God giving this bread from heaven. The people basically called manna, "What's this?" Notice that this editorial note must have been made by Moses just before he died, or by the writer of Joshua.

The giving of manna is important for us as disciples. Jesus mentioned again and again that His disciples had to live free from the anxieties of today and the meeting of their daily needs. If God could do that there, He can meet my needs today here. I need to seek, knock and ask in following my Lord in the harvest. He has shown He can provide.

Exodus 17:1-7

Vs. 1-7 Why do you think the Lord is showing us another instance of the people complaining against Moses and not asking Him? I think it's ironic that the area around Mt. Sin-ai was referred to as the wilderness of "Sin." Unfortunately, we disciples can also fall into this kind of behavior.

Notice v. 3. I wonder if they will always complain in v. 3 of every chapter.

Notice they go after Moses and it is Moses who cries out to God. Why didn't they see God in this? If the people would have humbled themselves and prayed to God, the water would have come. I always feel bad for pastors when I read this. This "striking of the rock" was used to establish the authority of Moses in the eyes of the elders and people. God told Moses to do it. Later Moses will strike another rock when God tells him to do otherwise and will get in trouble. A disciple remains a disciple. We are never God and we need to obey just like everyone else.

But reading all of this, my heart goes out to Moses. What an incredible burden. He was prepared 40 years leading sheep in the wilderness, and now for another 40 years, he will lead these "sheep" in the wilderness. The daily strain of tending to this community must have been beyond all human endurance.

This is why, as disciples, we follow and live for Jesus. He is our primary desire and delight. Though we serve people, we don't live for them.

Matthew 22:1-33

The same was true for Jesus. Think of how often He mentions coming to do the Father's will. His love for us and willingness to give Himself was grounded in His love for the Father; and that gave Him, humanly speaking, the ability to love us and give His life for those who did not appreciate it. The disciple is no better than his master.

Vs. 1-14 Here is Jesus, about to die, making an appeal and warning the people and leaders about stiff-arming God when He is inviting them to salvation and the glory of living eternally with Him. It is hard for anyone to comprehend that this world is ruined and going to be destroyed and

that it will be replaced with a new one. If you reject the creator of this house while He lets you live in it, He won't take you to the next house. That seems fair to me.

Notice how hard this parable is. There is a lot of judgment and killing here. Who says Jesus only spoke of love and peace and flowers? The judgment will be dark and the warning needs to accurately reflect that truth.

Notice in vs. 10-11, people were brought in from the street. That means that they were supplied with wedding garments. Having received this sort of "grace," and then, not to respond to it by putting on what was given to celebrate the wedding was, again, to reject the host. I would say that some people who flutter around the light, and flutter around church and the truth, and take part in the pot-lucks, and go on the mission trips and sing the songs, and call Him "Lord, Lord" but don't do what Jesus says, will find that they didn't really "put on Christ," but just satisfied their own needs. (Matt. 7:21-27)

Vs. 15-22 All you can say here is "Whoa!" What a cool illustration. What is made in the image of God belongs to Him. All men are to give themselves to God.

Vs. 23-33 The Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection so they were "sad, you see." ☺

Jesus takes them to school and avoids the entanglement of giving an answer to "who got her." As far as I can see, answering this question according to the way the Sadducees asked it wouldn't have gotten Jesus in trouble like the question about taxes; but it would have lowered His authority to the silly speculation of the scribes and other teachers. He would have been discredited.

The coolest line here is v. 32. Every year when I read that, I think, "Of course! I should have seen that."

Psalm 27:1-6

The tragedy of this reading is that you only get the first six verses. Laura and I recently memorized this psalm because of the message. In our challenges as the Lord leads us through this wilderness, we need to remember what is important as we wait for and look to the Lord. In memorizing, you try to remember the next verse logically, looking for connections of thought or any linkage of words. There is a definite connection between vs. 6 & 7 that you miss here.

Vs. 1-3 Can you imagine that kind of calmness in the face of threat and adversity? David lived this.

V. 4 This was David's strength and desire. This is why David became known as a man after God's own heart.

Vs. 5-6 This is where David knew his strength and glory came from, that is, from the presence of the Lord. In that presence, whether publicly or privately, David committed himself to always praising God.

My suggestion would be to read all of Psalm 27 today and then tomorrow. It's a great psalm and it's not long.

Proverbs 6:20-26

Since Solomon is writing this, you wonder if he is somehow reflecting on his father, King David, who was ruined by his adultery, oddly enough, with Solomon's mother. I don't know.

What I do know is that if the Spirit has made the effort to be this persistent in this warning, we need to be on the alert.

Vs. 20-26 Notice it is the discipline of hearing the Word and desiring God that keeps a person focused from desiring the lies of sexual adventure.

Although both genders can commit adultery, the force of this warning is toward the weakness of men, who can be captured by the lust of their eyes and their fantasy. Ironically this is also what happened to Solomon. And again, the danger we face today, that other generations never faced, is the ease of viewing internet pornography. It's killing us. Men, the best defense is a good offense. Read and practice Proverbs 5:15-19, often.

The warning of Paul/Spirit in 1 Corinthians 10:11-12 not only applies to our bent to forget God's provision like the people in our OT reading, but is also appropriate for this proverb. *Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*