

Marah and the Wilderness of Sin

August, 2008 Teaching

Scripture References: Exodus 13ff.; Numbers 14:22-23; I Corinthians 10:1-10

Although our ministry is an expert on the devil, his kingdom and false religion I've said for many years that "there are only two things that can keep you from receiving from God and the devil is not one of them." This month I'm going to prove it to you from the Old Testament through the Law of Double Reference.

In *Revelations from God* which we released in November, 2007, I shared a "Revelation on Once Saved Doctrine" or what is commonly called the doctrine of Eternal Security. Because I was ordained as a Southern Baptist I was taught this doctrine and believed it whereas my wife, who was ordained as a Four Square minister was never taught it so it was not a problem for her; it was not part of her "false doctrine."

My pastor in Houston, Brother John Osteen, built the largest Pentecostal church in Houston (and second in members only to Ed Young's Second Baptist Church at the time I left when the Lord moved us out of the Houston area to begin full time ministry in 1984). At the time I began attending Lakewood in 1978 the church only had about 1500 members and they were divided about 50/50 (although there was a "smattering" of Presbyterian, Methodists, etc.) between Spirit-filled Southern Baptists and Catholics. A number of times from the pulpit Brother Osteen would be talking about Catholic doctrine and stop, then say, "You might be saying, 'Well, what about their false doctrine?' Well, what about *your* false doctrine?" Over the years, especially during the last 11 years as the Lord began to reveal this false church, Babylonian system which poses as the true Church, I've realized how true and accurate was what Brother Osteen said. We all tend to have some false doctrine that we've been taught. You can only have faith and believe what you've been taught. That's why it is so important to spend time in the Word to renew your mind; you will be shown by the Holy Spirit what your false doctrine is.

On August 10, 1998, I recorded in my journal (p. 132 in *Revelations from God* for the complete revelation) "Perhaps no other religious doctrine has sent more people to hell and kept Christians from doing the work of the ministry than this one." I was referring to the doctrine of eternal security. I still stand by that statement.

When I received the Baptism of Power by the Spirit in 1978 I saw almost immediately in the Word many scriptures that repudiate this doctrine of eternal security. In fact, I read one almost every day during my time with the Lord in the mornings when I read and meditate the Word (I go through the entire Bible this way every month).

As I've said for at least 30 years, "Most scholars are watching the wrong Israel when trying to discern the signs of the times and the return of the Lord Jesus. Instead of watching the Israel of the Middle East they should be 'watching' the Israel of the Old Testament." Of course there are many scriptures that we can also use to discern the signs of the times regarding the nation of Israel but if we understand the Law of Double Reference we should be able to tell where the Church is and even our own lives by the wilderness wanderings of Israel after they came out of Egypt.

If you read the Pentateuch and then the Book of Joshua closely you will see that only two things kept the original people from entering their Promised Land – sin and unbelief. Of course we could also say there is only one thing, sin, because unbelief is itself sin (Romans 14:23); however, I think it's important to differentiate the two and the Spirit of God does so in the narrative from the Old Testament of the Wilderness Wanderings of Israel.

Today I want to look at the first portion of that wandering because it was Spirit-led so there can be no doubt that this portion of the journey was the will of God, right? The dividing line between those who entered the Promised Land (only two qualified, think of that!) and those who did not occurred later at Kadesh Barnea where the sin of unbelief finally fully manifested (God said to Moses it was the tenth time) so they “were not able to enter into rest through unbelief” as the Book of Hebrews later shows us. The wilderness wanderings portion of their journey *after* Kadesh was clearly *not* the will of God whereas the first portion of their journey was. I don’t know if you’ve ever studied this or thought about it but I trust you will meditate on what I am sharing because it has application to your own life and your “journey” in the Wilderness of Sin.

“But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness
Of the Red Sea ...” Exodus 13:18

Notice it was God who “led the people through the wilderness” so it was His will. Clearly the Passover (salvation and deliverance out of bondage by the *Blood*) and the journey through the Red Sea are also spiritual types for the Christian of salvation and water baptism; the Apostle Paul reaffirms this (I Cor. 10). After God destroyed Pharaoh’s army (Josephus says that this was a huge army composed of 200,000 foot soldiers, 50,000 cavalry and 10-20,000 chariots), the people were led after 3 days to Marah. They were quite thirsty but the water was bitter.

Marah is a type of this life on earth. Although I was saved as a child of nine and cannot personally relate to this it’s been my experience that the average Christian enjoys a “honeymoon” period after they repent of their sinful life and become a Christian. This honeymoon period lasts from 2-3 years. Basically, because they’re *baby* Christians the Lord takes care of them and speaks very clearly to them. But then it’s time for them to begin growing up and maturing; that is the work of both the Holy Spirit and the Christian as we must work with Him to help “conform us to the image of Christ.” It’s at Marah where the baby Christian learns that just because they are now in the family of God does not mean that there will not be some bitter experiences in life. Life is a journey toward our true home – “a city whose builder and maker is God.” These experiences are often tests to strengthen our faith and trust in God; however, if we react negatively and begin to murmur and complain as Israel did then we fail God’s test.

Notice at Marah what God did to “make the bitter water sweet.” He told Moses to throw a tree into the bitter water. Obviously the tree is a type of the cross of Calvary. This always reminds me of what the Lord said to Evie when He first moved us to Montana 11 years ago. He said, “Don’t let the devil cause you to lose your focus.” That’s exactly what the devil wants to do with these “bitter” experiences of life such as the death of a child, a child on drugs, financial ruin, health issues, etc. He wants to take your mind off the One who is leading you. Remember, it was God Himself who brought them to Marah. It was a test. Are you passing God’s tests?

The lesson of Marah is simple: even after becoming a Christian you will encounter some bitter experiences in life. Don’t focus on the bitter experience or wonder “why” God allowed the circumstance into your life but rather keep your focus on the Cloud – the Holy Spirit – who is leading you toward your eternal home. Keep your eyes on the Cross and the bitter experiences will become sweet.

After Marah, it’s interesting that the Israelites are then led to Elim which means “large trees.” The Bible says there were 12 wells of water at Elim and 70 palm trees. Twelve is the symbol of God’s government, particularly the order of God’s government brought through the foundational teaching of the twelve apostles. It’s quite clear, although little understood by most Christians, that God’s government was established upon the earth through the Doctrine of the Apostles during the days of the early Church (*cf.* Acts 2:42) and is carried forward today (or it should be even though in most churches it’s not) through

Five-fold ministry of apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher and evangelist who are supposed to teach and preach the same thing Peter, Paul and John preached – the Doctrine (teaching) of the Apostles.

The stop at Elim was a refreshing stop; there was plenty of water for several million people in the twelve wells and there were 70 palm trees. Seventy is the number of ministry and “elders” (Five-fold ministers as all elders in the NT were Five-fold ministers unlike to day). During these days there were 70 elders of Israel the Bible tells us and in the NT Jesus “appointed” 70 others (Gk. Heteros) as ministers in addition to the twelve and they had power and authority over the devil and demons. These additional ministers are placed into the Body to provide refreshment, encouragement, rest and help to all Christians on the journey through the Wilderness of Sin.

After Elim they journeyed to Mt. Sinai and we all know what happened there but we’ve probably have never taken time to study the word and realize that they stayed here a whole year! It was here, at this long “rest stop” that the people were supposed to learn who God was and what He expected of them. The Law was given and God’s government was established with His authority given to Moses, the prophet, and sin sacrifice established through Aaron and the priests. God gave them plenty of time, even after their rebellion with the golden calves, to learn His requirements and to “choose righteousness.” Unfortunately, they did not learn much about God and after the Spirit moved from Sinai 3 days into the Wilderness of Sin again many of the people were destroyed by spiritual fire because they did not learn their lesson of faith and began to murmur and complain against the Lord God of Israel.

I want to encourage you this month to make a decision in your own life never to murmur and complain against the Lord; He doesn’t like it. As I’ve said many times, Jesus never promised us this life would be easy – He has many things that need to be done and He needs people to do them. If you make yourself available to the Lord to do them you will be attacked and it won’t be easy. The Lord has told me many times that what He’s called me to do – speak to the Church – “won’t be easy and you’ll be persecuted.” But just remember, He also told us, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Praise God!

The Christian life is a journey and it requires faith to make it through the desert. It is a wilderness of sin and you will always be tempted in this life to sin or to return to Egypt where material things were provided for you.

Evie had a vision many years ago of she, I and the Lord in Heaven after it was all over. We were sitting at a small table like a card table with the Lord between us. He turned to her and simply said, “It was worth it, wasn’t it?”