

KEY TEXT

2 Kings 2:19-22 (ESV)

Verse 19- Now the men of the city said to Elisha, "Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful."

V20- He said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought it to him.

V21- Then he went to the spring of water and threw salt in it, and said, "Thus says the LORD, I have made this water wholesome; henceforth neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it."

V22- So the water has been wholesome to this day, according to the word which Elisha spoke.

INTRODUCTION

I. Repeated Experience of Defeat and Frustration

Title

'DISEASED SPIRITUAL RIVERS'

Outline:

- **The River of God- From Genesis to Revelation**
- **Evidence of a Healthy Spiritual River**
- **Two Biblical Examples of Diseased Waters**
- **Healing the Diseased Waters**

MAIN POINTS

(I) THE RIVER OF GOD—FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

God has always used **RIVERS as a symbol of **HIS LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT**.**

From Genesis to Revelation, we see examples of His desire to touch people through the rivers that flow between the pages of His Word:

- The river in the garden (**Genesis 2:10**)
- The river in the city (**Psalms 46:4**)
- The river in the wilderness (**Joshua 3:1,2,14,15**)
- The river in the Temple (**Ezekiel 47:1-12**)
- The river in the believer (**John 7:37-39**)
- The river from His throne (**Revelation 22:1**)

God desires that every church and every believer have a healthy river, a place of passing through new experience and a place of encountering a new flow of spiritual life, power and blessings.

This river signifies a **DIVINE SPIRITUAL FORCE that waters the people of God through His rich and ever-enduring presence.**



There is a river of God that is encouraged by obeying God's proven principles and patterns.

There is also a river that speaks of a spiritual flow and Holy Spirit activity within the context of **REVIVAL – healing, power and fresh anointing all mixed together and flowing without human initiative or human control.**

We step into the river by hungering and thirsting after Him.

Like healing minerals, God's supernatural power becomes evident and we are refreshed, cleansed and healed by the river.

(II) EVIDENCE OF A HEALTHY SPIRITUAL RIVER

The magnificence of the river is seen in its great power to bring:

- **life not death,**
- **healing not sickness,**
- **growth not stagnation,**
- **multitudes not smallness,**
- **world outreaches not ingrownness.**

The river of God in our churches is to be like the river in Ezekiel's vision:

- **The river is a place for many trees to be planted (Ezekiel 47:7)**
- **The river reaches to the eastern regions (Ezekiel 47:8)**
- **The river flows down into every valley (Ezekiel 47:8)**
- **The river brings healing to the waters (Ezekiel 47: 9)**
- **The river causes life to spring forth everywhere (Ezekiel 47:9)**

- The river has a great multitude of fish
(Ezekiel 47:9)
- The river causes healing and health to everything
(Ezekiel 47:9)
- The river will be a place for net fishing
(Ezekiel 47:10)
- The river will minister healing to the nations
(Ezekiel 47:12)
- The river will produce very fruitful trees (verse 12)

Illustration: *"The Keeper of the Spring"*

Application: At times, barrenness is a human-induced problem; at other times a judgment of God for violations of God's ordained laws.

The point is that **we must keep watch over our spiritual lives.**

We must see to it that **we don't stagnate through lack of worship and intimacy with the Father.**

We must see to it that the rivers do NOT become polluted with.....

- **UNBALANCED TEACHING**
- **IMPURE MOTIVES AND ATTITUDES**
- **GARBAGE AND FALSE NEWS FROM THE SOCIAL MEDIA**
- **FILTH LIKE PORNOGRAPHY FROM THE INTERNET**
- **LOGJAMS OF UNFORGIVENESS**

THE SUBTLE SWAMPS IN THE MIDST OF REVIVAL

We must also be alerted to a subtle potential death that can occur right in the MIDDLE OF REVIVAL, during a time of rain and power – the swamps and marshes: “But its swamps and marshes will not be healed; they will be given over to salt” (Ezekiel 47:11).



The potential swamps and marshes in the local church that have the capacity of destroying the power of God's River are the **LOW GROUNDS FILLED WITH WATER, CAUSING THE GROUND TO BECOME NON-PRODUCTIVE BECAUSE OF CONTINUAL WETNESS.**

God desires a **RIVER** not a SWAMP, a **FLOW** not a BOG.

Application: A church that lingers too long in the waters of revival without investing in proper teaching, sound doctrine, family building and character shaping will eventually turn into swamp.

God desires that our waters be healed, that our rivers be pure and that our spiritual flow not be mixed or compromised.

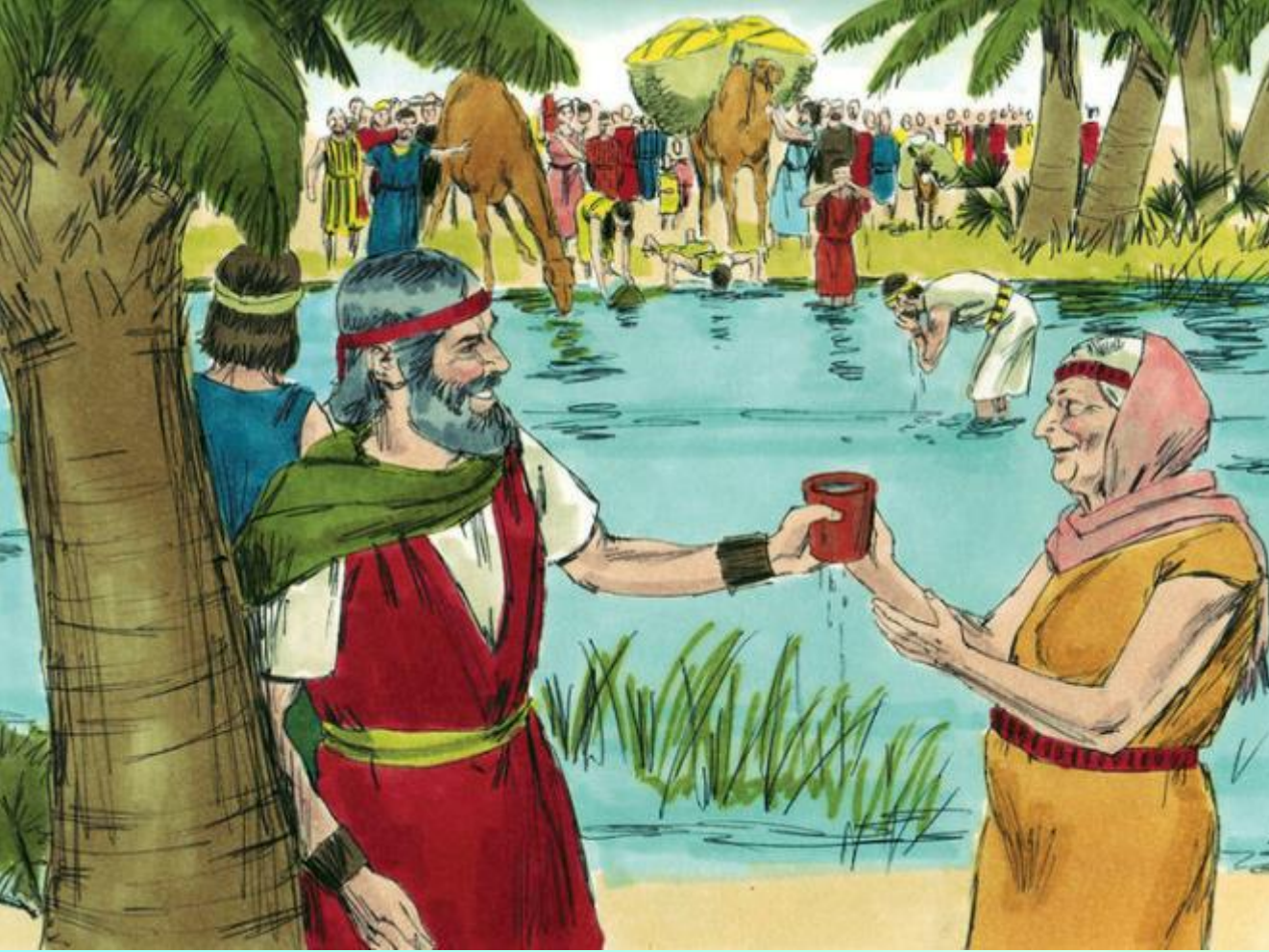
He wants us to enjoy the **FRESH RAINS OF REVIVAL** but He also wants us to **be rooted as trees that are grounded in the basics of His truth.**

(III) TWO BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF DISEASED WATERS

The Bible gives two examples of diseased waters:

(A) ELISHA AND THE BAD WATERS – 2 KINGS 2:19-21

The barren land of Jericho City was connected to the barren water, water that needed healing.



This diseased water was able to cast death into the land and barrenness into the crops. It was water, but it was sick water.

(B)MOSES AND THE BITTER WATER – EXODUS 15:22-27

After crossing the Red Sea, Moses led the children of Israel into the Wilderness of Shur.

For three days, they traveled with no water in sight. The people began to murmur.

When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water because it was bitter.

The waters at Marah was diseased.



(IV) HEALING THE DISEASED WATERS

A church may have:

- **a stagnant river**
- **a mixed river**
- **a weak flowing river**
- **a shallow river**
- **a dead river**
- **a destroying out-of-control river;**
- **a religious river filled with forms and tradition but no real life.**

Whatever the case, God desires to heal your waters and to bring new life and health into your river.

This healed river will break the bands of barrenness and release a powerful new flow of God upon the church.

Personally, as believers, we may have a diseased river flowing within us due to **CURSE or due to a **TEST** by God.**

(A) DISEASED RIVER AS A RESULT OF A CURSE

The case in point is **ELISHA AND THE BAD WATER (2 Kings 2:19-21)**.

WHY WAS THE WATER BAD IN THE FIRST PLACE?

The CITY OF JERICHO HAD BEEN LIVING UNDER A DIVINE JUDGMENT (CURSE) SINCE THE DAYS OF JOSHUA.

Joshua 6:26- At that time, Joshua pronounced this solemn oath: “Cursed before the LORD is anyone who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho: “At the cost of his firstborn son he will lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest he will set up its gates.”

Just like our **SIN-CURSED** world, Jericho's curse could only be lifted by the sacrifice of a **FIRST-BORN**.

Christ, the first-born of God the Father, had died on the cross for you and me so as to lift up the **SIN-CURSED** world.

All the wealth and collected wisdom of the town fathers could not remove this "*plague of bitter waters.*"

The same is true of the sinful condition of mankind: all the wisdom, wealth and schemes of man cannot change his sinful state one iota. The nature of sin is what it is and there is nothing any human being can do about it apart from Jesus Christ.

The desperate need of Jericho represents the desperate need of every life lived apart from Jesus Christ: divine healing.

1.THE SAD CONDITION

The state of Jericho can be viewed in two different aspects:

(i) It was pleasant

Verse 19a - "Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant....."

Looking at Jericho from the **OUTSIDE**, from a distance, everything looked good. The town was in a good location. The soil was rich in possibilities. The climate was perfect. The city was well-built and beautiful to look at.

A person without God in his life, may have success, prosperity, a measure of joy and happiness, friends and all things this world may have to offer. Imagine that kind of life.

(i)The ground was barren

Verse 19b – “but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful.”

The people of Jericho worked and worked that land but to no avail.

The problem was not the land or the growing conditions.

It was the **water.**

The water was bad.

The people were treating the **SYMPTOM but ignoring the **SOURCE** of the problem.**

Here is another sad portrait of a person without Christ.

Those without Christ become experts at treating the **SYMPTOMS- symptoms like a bad marriage, financial problems, family tension, job dissatisfaction, alcoholism, or emotional distress.**

These same people have failed to see their real problem – **they need a relationship with Jesus Christ.**

The fruit of joy and peace cannot grow in a patch of weeds and thistles - the state of the human heart without God.

They continually “*kick against the goad,*” trying to get what they cannot have without God.

These people may do all the right things by the reckoning of man, but their problem is not what they are doing.

Rather it is what they have failed to do – **seek the healing of their sin-sick hearts.**

1.THE CURE

(i)Its nature

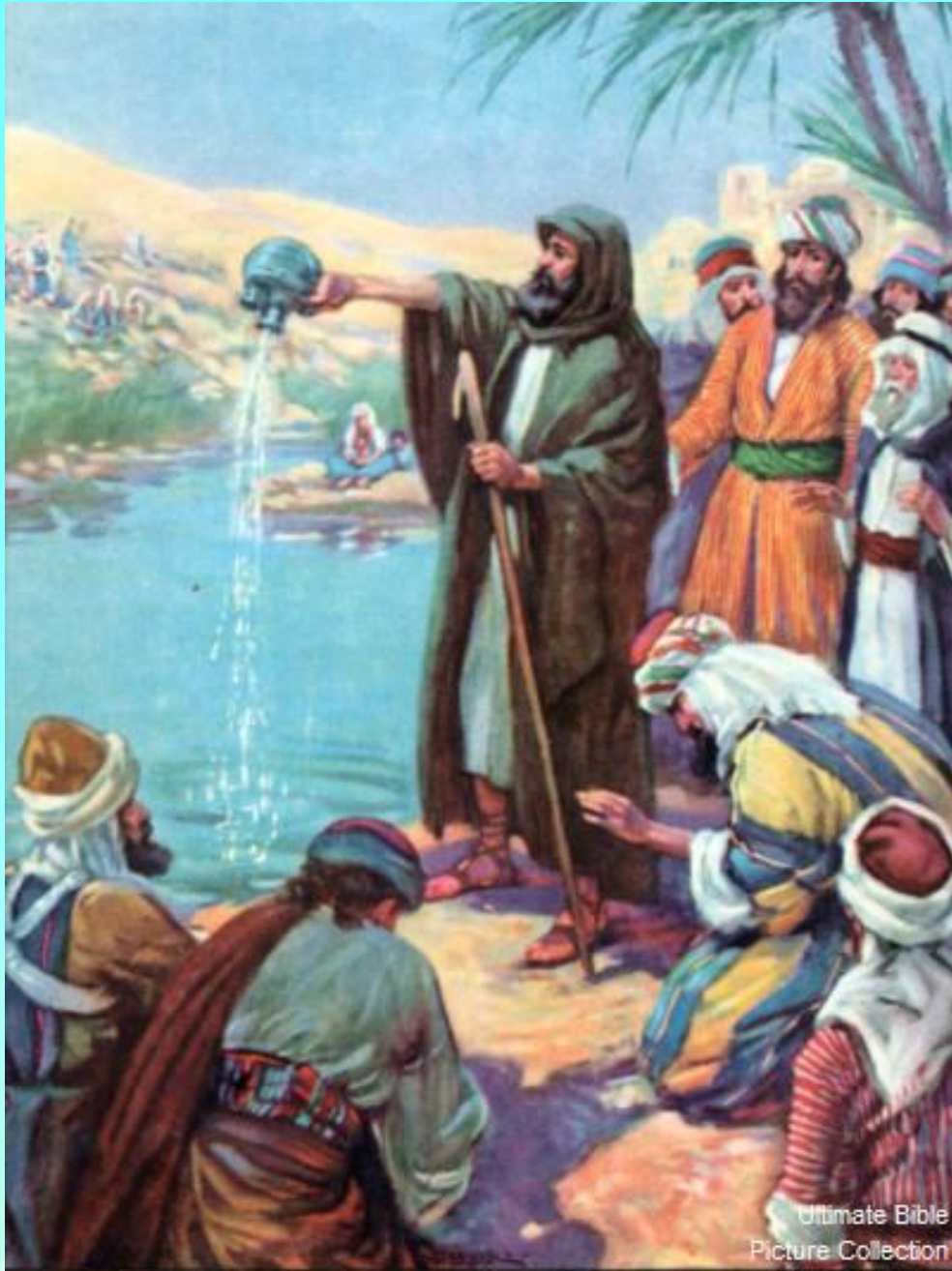
**V20- He said, “Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it.”
So they brought it to him.**

This NEW BOWL is really a picture of the New Testament, with Jesus Christ as the SALT OF SALVATION.

In Elisha’s work of restoration, the salt represents the HEALING POWER OF GOD.

(i)Its application

V21- Then he went to the spring of water and threw salt in it, and said, “Thus says the LORD, I have made this water wholesome; henceforth neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it.”



Elisha went right to the **SOURCE (spring)** in order to heal the water.

He did not try to heal the ground or heal the **streams** or the bodies of water around Jericho.

The salt could not work its miracle until it came in contact with **THE SPRING THAT FED THE STREAMS AROUND THE CITY.**

The salt in the bowl did nothing for anybody.

Elisha needed to exert an effort; **he needed to find the source of the problem and he needed to throw the salt into it .**

Identify and apply – our job

Application: Nobody can make themselves righteous or holy by doing “good things”.

Trying to work your way into heaven would be like Elisha trying to purify a **stream** while the **spring** was still spewing forth the diseased water.

It is not Jesus Christ in the Bible that saves.

It is Jesus Christ in your heart that saves.

Just as Elisha cast his salt into the spring, dealing with the source of the diseased water, so our Lord Jesus cast salt into the spring of our life when He told Nicodemus: You must be born again.

1. The Results

(i) The healing

V22- So the water has been wholesome to this day, according to the word which Elisha spoke.

The streams around Jericho, the streams that irrigated the land, were healed and they remained healed.

If the heart is healed, the life will be healed also.

Only the Great Physician can do that.

When Jesus Christ comes into a life, He heals it completely and forever.

The presence of Jesus Christ in a person's life changes everything about that person.

2 Corinthians 5:17- Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here.

The streams that surrounded Jericho still looked the same after they were healed, but they were as different as night is from day!

Once they killed, now they brought life.

A person who is born again may look the same, but once he was dead, now he is alive!

(ii) The land became fruitful

Verse 21b- henceforth neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it."

The land that just a day before was poisonous and barren, the next day was perfect for growing crops in.

The water that just one day earlier was bitter and unusable, the next day was cold, clean and pure.

If this is what the power of God could do to a spring of water, imagine what He can do with a life that is turned over to Him!

God can transform any life into something pure and useful.

He can turn a sinner from one who is dead into a one who not only lives but is able to help others to live.

John 15:4- Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

When we are in Christ, we bear the best kind of fruit.

Fruit is more than the result of what we do, though.

A life with Christ in it will produce other lives with Christ in them.

When the spring changed, all the water changed.

When your life is changed by the power of God, other lives will be changed, as you live in obedience to Him.

John 7:38- Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.

Application: You can spend all of your life trying to tackle some outward sins but if you do not see and acknowledge what the source of the problem is, then you will never truly find the right solution.

Elisha knew what to do.

It would take the **salt** (GOD'S PRESERVING LIFE) in a **new bowl** (OUR LIVES AFTER BEING BORN AGAIN) being poured out into the **SPRING, THE SOURCE OF THE PROBLEM** (OUR OLD NATURE).

May be like the city of Jericho, some of you are living under a curse.

It seems there is a repeated set pattern of failure, death and barrenness in your life.

Could it be there is a generational curse operating in your family tree?

If so, then today, you need to see graphically how Christ broke this curse that caused the spiritual river flowing within you and through you to be diseased.

For Jericho, in order to break the curse, **the firstborn and the youngest must die.**

Please see that today, **the firstborn of our salvation, Christ has died on the cross so that this curse of a diseased river is broken.**

And as long as we being the youngest in the family of God, with Christ as our eldest brother, identify with the death of Christ (=die along with Christ), we too can reverse this accursed diseased river and turn it into a life-giving stream.

Our only job is to identify the source of our problem and apply the salt – the Holy Spirit and the preserving power of the word of God.

When Christ died on the cross, God did not leave His soul in Hades and He did not allow The Holy One (Jesus) to see corruption, so that today you will not be corrupted by any generational curse. Instead, God has made known to us the ways of life through Christ and He will make us full of joy in His presence (Acts 2:27-28).

(B) DISEASED RIVER AS A RESULT OF A TEST

The case in point is **MOSES AND THE BITTER WATER (EXODUS 15:22-26)**.

VERSE 22

Exodus 15:22 – Then Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur: they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

After God delivered the Israelites so gloriously by parting the Red Sea and then drowning all their enemies, we might have thought that He would lead them into the Promised Land.

Instead, He led them into the **WILDERNESS.**

And rather than having every need and want supplied by this omnipotent God who had parted the Red Sea, they went three days without water.

Application: God does not lead us to heaven on a beautiful sunny day on a path strewn with rose petals. Rather, it is **through tribulation that we must enter the kingdom of God.**

VERSE 23

V23- When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah.

The word “Marah” means “bitter”.

At Marah, there was a large pool of water.

The people must have rejoiced greatly when they came to Marah.

But when they drank the water, it tasted so bitter and foul that they spat it out.

Application: As Christians, we are going to have various needs and desires.

We are going to want acceptance, happiness, fulfillment, satisfaction, joy and pleasure.

However, all of us make the mistake of thinking we are going to find those kinds of things at **Marah**.

We think that **REAL LIFE** comes from our status, approval, recognition, power or money or fame or even sensual pleasures.

But when you pursue status, approval, recognition, power, money, fame or sensual pleasures, **you are just drinking at MARAH.**

And you will quickly discover that the waters are bitter. They are undrinkable.

E.g. Solomon

“Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!”

He drank from **Marah and found the waters to be **bitter.****

John 4:13-14- “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

You can write this over everything you find in this world – new cars, big houses, beautiful women, wealth, power, fame, “everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again.”

Often a person who pursues the things of the world to quench his thirst will only find later that he has become a **slave of that thing.**

VERSES 24-25

V24- And the people murmured against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"

V25- And he cried to the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, and he threw it into the water and the water became sweet. There the LORD made for them a statute and an ordinance and there he proved them,

There at Marah, God **tested them.**

This was why the Israelites were unable to find water in the wilderness for three days.

God was behind this crisis.

The Lord had purposed that they would not be able to find the water as a **test.**

How would they respond?

The people murmured. They complained.

Application: When you experience your Marahs, how do you respond?

When you are disappointed that something or someone is not filling a need in your life, do you murmur, complain and grumble?

God is testing you!

We can respond to our Marahs the way the Israelites did, or the way Moses did.

The children of Israel murmured.

But Moses **CRIED OUT TO THE LORD.**



Application: If you are finding yourself this morning at a diseased river, a Marah, cry out to the Lord. Spread your complaints out to Him.

And do you know that what He will do?

HE WILL SHOW YOU A TREE.

And when Moses threw that tree into the bitter waters, it became sweet.

So, is there no way to find fulfilment, happiness, joy, contentment, peace, satisfaction and pleasure in this life?

No!

The Lord showed Moses a **tree.**

When he threw it into the waters, it became sweet.

All through the Scriptures, the "tree**" is an emblem of the
CROSS OF THE JESUS CHRIST.**

"Cursed is everyone who hangs on a **TREE." (Galatians 3:13)**

"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the **TREE." (1 Peter 2:24).**



**“They put Him to death by hanging Him on a TREE.”
(Acts 10:39).**

“And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the TREE and laid him in a tomb.” (Acts 13:29).

So, if you have found that you have been drinking at the waters of Marah, the diseased water, and have found them bitter, what are you to do?

CAST IN THE TREE.



This means -BRING YOUR SAVOIR WHO DIED FOR SINS INTO THAT SITUATION.

AS LONG AS YOU LOOK TO THE CREATURES, YOU WILL FIND IT BITTER.

Stop looking to possessions to satisfy you and start looking to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every thing you look to in order to satisfy you other than God is a FALSE GOD.

You have made for yourself an idol.

Your false god might be possession, a husband or a wife, or fame or power or recognition or sensual pleasures.

But if you seek joy or happiness or fulfillment from them, rather than from God, they are **idols in your life.**

Why did God deliberately lead the children of Israel into the wilderness where He knew they would be three days without water?

Why does He make us drink bitter water from the diseased river when we are seeking satisfaction in the **CREATURE rather than the **CREATOR?****

- **To Drive Us Back To Himself –**

If God allowed the world to be sweet to us, and to satisfy our longings and desires, we would feel no need for God.

But God in His great kindness, turns the waters of this world into bitterness, so that we will look to God.

God is kindly prying your fingers from this world so that you can enjoy the **TRUE TREASURE – GOD HIMSELF.**

- **To Reveal To Us More Of Himself-**

In Exodus 15:27, we read that after the Israelites left Marah, they came to Elim where there were 12 springs of water and 70 date palms and they camped there beside the waters.



Elim was the place of REFRESHMENT for these Israelites.

There were 12 springs of water, one for each tribe of Israel. There were 70 date palms they could eat of.

But notice that God did not reveal A NEW NAME to them at Elim?

But He did reveal a NEW NAME at Marah.

In verse 26, He tells them, "I am the LORD, your healer."

JEHOVAH-ROPHI

This was a new revelation to the Israelites.

**This was the first time God had revealed Himself as
"The LORD is your healer."**

God had just HEALED the bitter waters and made them sweet.

Likewise, God could heal those foul diseases in their bodies and make them well.

Haven't you found in your life, that God reveals more about Himself and speaks to you more about Himself and speaks to you more when you are at **Marah, than when you are at **Elim**?**

Are you experiencing some diseased river flowing with bitterness within you?

Take heart!

Elim is your next stop in your journey.

And God is teaching you valuable lessons right now about Himself and about the VANITY of the things of this world to satisfy you.

Look to Him, trust Him, depend on Him and He will make your bitter waters sweet.

CONCLUSION

Which diseased water is flowing in your life right now?

Is it a diseased river as a result of a **CURSE or is it a **TEST** in your life?**

God will direct us as believers to know how to bring the needed healing.

One believer may be told that **SALT must be cast into the water.**

Salt speaks of the power of preservation and penetration through the Spirit of the new covenant and His word, returning to the sure blessing of the first-born.

Another believer might be directed by the Spirit to cast a TREE into the waters as in Exodus 15:23 and 25.

Our part in healing the waters is not to be like the murmuring Israelites but to be like Moses who cried to the Lord, begged him for insight, spiritual perspective, a word for this present pool of bitter water.....what will bring the healing? What will stop the barrenness?

“And the Lord showed him...” This is your hope and ground of intercession.

The Lord will SHOW YOU the specific act of healing for your diseased waters.

It will not be the same as that of other believers.

But for now, for this Marah, for this bitter water, He will show you what you should do.

“And the LORD showed him a tree, and he threw it into the water and the water became sweet (Verse 25).

For Moses, it was a **tree.**

For Elisha it was the **salt.**

Each had the power because each had received the word of the Lord for that moment and for that specific diseased water or river.

God delights in speaking to His children and “showing them” what they need to cast into the waters.

The healed river will be like the river in Revelation 22:1- “And he showed me a pure water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

Your life will bear much fruit when the water of your life is healed.

There will be no barrenness, no miscarriages, no lack of fruitfulness but a springing forth with much fruit.

Rise up, Christians, and step into the water.

My Testimony

Exodus 15 :26- “If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon you which I put upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD, your healer.”

END

