

Exodus Chapters 15-16 - John Karmelich

Let me summarize these two chapters in two words: "Gratitude & Obedience". If there's one thing I've learned well in life is grateful people are happy people. You can't have one without the other. I'd also argue the best way to be obedient to what God demands of us is to also be grateful for what He's done for us. If you realize Jesus is God, He died for every sin we'll ever commit and accept Him as being in charge of our life, well those are great reasons to be grateful. If we don't take the time to express some gratitude to God daily, we won't appreciate the wonderful ways He has blessed us! I've been a believer for a long time, but it wasn't until I've developed a daily habit of expressing gratefulness to God before I rely upon His power to live the type of life He desires we live no matter what we deal with in life!

To state what should be obvious by now, these chapters open with the Israelites expressing gratitude to God for rescuing them from slavery. In fact, we learn more about the details of how God rescued them (through the whole Red Sea thing) in this poem (song) in Chapter 15 than we learned in the account of The Red Sea story of the previous chapter. After Chapter 15's "praise fest", we get more miracles as He guides their lives to go as He desires. Obviously none of us get a "Parting the Red Sea"! What He asks is we walk by faith in what He did do and trust He's still guiding us for His glory as long we live!

OK time for details: A question I pondered is how did Moses get 2,000,000 people to learn this song? After all, he couldn't just text everyone lyrics! I suspect God inspired the lyrics, he wrote it down sang it a few times to the leaders of the 12 tribes. By repetition all the Israelites were soon singing it! In the original Hebrew, there's a melody to this song. We just have to read the translation and ponder what it means. In short, the lyrics describe how the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground and when the Egyptian army tried to follow them, they drowned as the sea came back to its normal size. Some do argue the sea wasn't that deep. If that were true, how could the Egyptians drown in that sea? At first I thought the purpose of this song was to teach us details about the flood. Later I realized it's about God trying to teach us the importance of gratitude. We can't appreciate God if we're not grateful for all the things He's done to guide our lives for His glory. Bottom line, in "no time flat" the Israelites learned it and sang it became a "marching tune" as they worked their way across the desert.

As all of us know, in life there are problems we must deal with. After a bit of travel time, they ran out of water and needed to deal with that. They came to a place that had water but it was not drinkable. A strange solution was found. God had Moses put a log in the water and make it sweet! Obviously that's not a logical solution. Once again, this is about God doing for us what we can't do for ourselves. What I see in this picture is a "tree thrown in the water" is a reminder that God said anyone's cursed who gets hung on a tree (Deuteronomy 21:23). It ties to Jesus being cursed for the sake of our sins. I'm saying it is a visual picture of God fixing what we can't fix by paying the 100% price for our sins.

Then we get a declaration by God that if the Israelites obey Him, they won't have any of the diseases of Egypt. Does that mean if we're obedient none of us will die young of cancer? Of course not. It simply means the way the Egyptians died by the plagues won't affect believers as we trust Him to guide us for His glory. Anyway, that declaration leads to the last point in Chapter 15:

After that, the next spot on this journey was a place that had 12 springs of water and 70 palm trees? So why is that in the bible? All numbers in the bible have significance. It represents the idea of us being a God's perfection (rested on the 7th day) and 10 times that represents completeness (we got 10 fingers as well as 10 toes to make most of us complete). My point is when one sees numbers in the bible, such as 70, there is usually significance behind those numbers.

Then in Chapter 16 we get another famous story, "bread from heaven" also known as "manna". It just means, "What is it?" Remember the Israelites were walking through the desert and let's just say there's not a lot of grocery stores out there, so food was an issue. Again, God does for us what we can't do for ourselves! God rained manna down for 40 years even after the Israelites were afraid of those who lived in that land and God punished them by saying that generation had to die off before the next generation could enter the land. Manna rained down every day except the Sabbath. One had to get up early and I am sure one has to get on one's knees to collect it. Everyone had to get their own (except of course for infants and elderly). To me that's a good visual picture of starting one's day in prayer as we ask God to guide our lives and provide for us that day. If you think this isn't a miracle, consider that this was about a ton of food every year, for exactly 40 years and none of it fell in say Egypt or the land of Israel. What we are to gather from this story is simply the idea that trusting in God means He will guide us and He'll provide for us what we can't do for ourselves. I try to live every day assuming God's not going to do a thing and then trusting He's still guiding me for His glory!

The funny thing is even before the bread came down, the Israelites were grumbling about no food! It's not a sin to ask God for things. It is a sin to grumble that God's not doing enough for us! We tend not to think of grumbling as a sin, but it is in that we're not trusting that God will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves! Despite the grumbling, the bread came down every morning. For the sake of variety, God also caused quail to land around there. As a bird, quails get tired easily and rest on the ground. It is a matter of throwing a blanket or net over them to catch them, so it's not hard. Bottom line, God did provide food for them until they got to the Promised Land. So why did God stop then? Because He is teaching them and us to trust Him even when the "manna stops reigning from heaven"! We don't read of them starving to death when it finally stopped!

God also used the manna to teach them about the concept of resting on the 7th day. I'll get into this a lot more when we get to the 10 Commandments in Chapter 20. The idea of resting one day out of 7 is to remind ourselves how God rested on the 7th day and to take time to be with other believers to focus on God and all the good things He's done for us!

Bottom line, that's these two chapters summarized in two pages. The first step to trusting God is when we focus on the good things He's done in our lives and we express our gratitude for what He's done for us! It not only makes us grateful, it also helps us face whatever problems we must face at that moment of time. But John, the Israelites were singing this song and the next thing we read was grumbling about their situation! So did the singing help? Yes. The problem was that they got their focus off of God as they grumbled to themselves about the problem. My view about problems is one does what's logical as we do the best we can with the situation in front of us. Grumbling never solves our problems. Praying to God for help is always the first step. Then and only then do we make the best decisions we can with the information we have in front of us. If you think about it, the Israelites didn't ask if they can stop to use the bathroom or should they stop to rest for the night! They grumbled about what they couldn't fix as opposed to praying to God for what was beyond their control! Hopefully that's a lesson all of us can relate to as we go through our lives.

If interested, there are two other links on this chapter. They are for a more detailed lesson that I wrote about 20 years ago. Of course, you're welcome to read that if you'd like. Either way, I'm grateful that you did read this! If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again, John