

THE WATERS OF MARAH... and a study in trees
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(Exodus 15:22-25)

"He cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree . . ." The Marked New Testament has always attracted me, for the words of the Saviour printed in red type indicate messages of unusual importance. I have often said I would like to treat the entire Bible in similar manner, for here and there in the Scriptures we find statements of superlative interest. The text, "and the Lord shewed him a tree," is a striking example of that fact. The Cross may be seen almost anywhere in the Bible.

The Tree in the Garden of Eden

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden

And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant . . . , the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2: 8-9). It seems unfortunate that the theological emphasis has been on the second tree, and that the more important of the two trees, the tree of life, has been ignored. God created a perfect man, but Adam had to choose to conform to the divine will. When he disobeyed, sin entered his soul; had he been a wiser man and taken of the tree of life, he would have become "a partaker of the divine nature" (see Gen. 3 :22-24). Thus even in the earliest days of human history, God suggested that eternal life would be irrevocably linked with a sinner's intelligent approach to a tree.

The Tree at the Waters of Marah

"So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter" (Ex. 15 :22, 23). The situation was rapidly deteriorating when Moses desperately cried unto the Lord, and was shewn a tree. Possibly the scoffers in Israel laughed, but their scorn disappeared when God used that tree to bring living waters to their parched and complaining lips.

The Tree and the Serpent of Brass

The children of Israel were dying when, in answer to the prayer of Moses, God said, "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live" (Num. 21: 8). Centuries later the Lord Jesus said, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life " (John 3:14-15).

The Tree and the Lost Axe-Head

The servants of Elisha were engaged in building Operations when disaster fell upon the activities of one energetic young man. His "axe-head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed. And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim. Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand and took it," (2 Kings 6 : 5-7). Everyone who has seen dead sinners raised to newness of life will rejoice, for-

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Is anything too hard for the power of Calvary's cross?

The Tree and the Balm of Gilead

The forests of Gilead were famous throughout the ancient world. The trees produced a substance rich in medicinal quality, and "the balm of Gilead " was in world-wide demand. It was this fact which led the prophet of God to ask, " Is there no balm in Gilead? " (Jer. 8 :22). Surely, a world was being prepared for the time when healing virtues would stream from the cross of Calvary; when people of many nations would be able to come and buy . . . without money and without price " (Isa. 55 :1).

The Tree in the Teaching of Christ

"From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matt. 16 :21). The tree of life stood in the midst of the garden of Eden; the tree of grace stands in the centre of the will of God. At the former, Adam might have found life; at the latter, we have found life more abundant.

I take, O Cross, thy shadow
For my abiding place.

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