

# JEHOVAH-RAPHA – THE LORD WHO HEALS

Exodus 15:26

## INTRODUCTION

- In 2008 when Barak Obama won the nomination to run for President, he said, “this was the moment when the rise of the oceans began to slow and our planet began to heal”
- It was not so long ago that humanity understood the control of the tides and the healing of the planet to belong to the power of the Creator alone
- But today people are convinced that politicians possess these divine abilities
- It is curious that even the wicked and godless people of the world understand that the earth is in a state of sickness and in need of healing
- But the sickness of this world is not from *environmental* pollution as they claim, but from *moral* and *spiritual* pollution
- The curse that resulted from Adam’s sin has affected the whole of creation, so that “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:22)
- And the greatest effect of sin’s curse is seen in the highest of God’s earthly creatures, made in God’s image and likeness – mankind
- Originally made upright and righteous, in perfect communion with God, but since the fall, brought into a state of sin and misery
- Man now enters this world as a fallen sinner, under God’s wrath and curse, suffering the miseries of this life, of death itself, and the pains of hell forever
- Even as the creation itself looks for and waits for its deliverance from the bondage of the curse, so man feels within himself the sickness of his soul, and desires to find healing and deliverance from it
- Yet most people will seek in vain for their soul’s healing, looking to the impotent gods of false religions, philosophy, worldliness, carnality, self-reliance, etc.

- Even the children of Israel were guilty of seeking their healing and deliverance from false gods and foreign armies, which proved to be “broken cisterns that could hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13)
- Their false prophets “healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14)
- God alone is the Healer of sin – there is no other remedy
- Yet the history of humanity can be summed up as man’s general rejection of God’s provision of true healing, and the awful consequences of doing so, both in this life and the next
- Last week we considered the first of the compound names of the LORD – Jehovah-Jireh – the Lord who provides
- This name was revealed to Abraham as he offered his son, Isaac, when God intervened and provided a ram as the substitute for Abraham’s son
- We now move 400 years after Abraham to the time of Moses and the exodus of Israel from Egypt
- In Exodus 14, God delivered Israel from the pursuing Egyptians through the Red Sea
- In Exodus 15 is recorded the Song of Moses where the nation breaks forth into a song of praise to God for his mighty deliverance
- But immediately following this, the children of Israel find themselves in a desperate situation, dying of thirst in the wilderness
- And it is into this situation that God reveals himself as “the LORD that healeth thee”, which is literally Jehovah-Rapha (also rendered Jehovah-Rophe)

## **I. JEHOVAH-RAHPA REVEALS TO HIS PEOPLE**

A. God has revealed himself to man, and may be known by man

1. He is revealed in his creation and in his word

2. The Scriptures are a progressive revelation of the nature, character and works of God
  3. There are conditions, however, for a man to come to a knowledge of God
    - a. We must seek him with all our hearts (Deuteronomy 4:29; Jeremiah 29:13)
    - b. We must seek him with faith (Hebrews 11:6)
    - c. We must seek him with childlike humility (Matthew 11:25-27)
- B. The children of Israel were growing in their knowledge of God
1. In their bondage they cried to God and he heard their cry
  2. They learned of his power and wrath through the ten plagues he sent on the Egyptians
  3. They learned of his mercy in delivering them from the Egyptians, parting the Red Sea so they could pass through
  4. But the children of Israel were still in their infancy when it came to their knowledge of God
  5. As they travelled through the wilderness to Canaan, God would progressively reveal himself to them, through his
    - a. Providential care
    - b. His judgments
    - c. His laws
  6. God was taking them on a journey out of Egypt and into the land he had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
  7. Yet this was not merely a journey from one country to another, but a journey in Israel's knowledge of Jehovah as he revealed himself to them, and their journey in deeper trust in, dependence on, and love for their God (Exodus 19:4; Psalm 103:7)

## II. JEHOVAH-RAPHA PROVES HIS PEOPLE

### A. From heights of joy to depths of despair

1. The exodus from Egypt remains one of the high points in the history of Israel
2. The release from slavery, the spoiling of the Egyptians, the crossing of the Red Sea, the drowning of Pharaoh's army was the clearest demonstration of God's power on the behalf of his chosen people
3. The Song of Moses (Exodus 15:1-21) was the joyful response of the people in praising and worshipping God for all he had done
4. Yet within three days it was all a distant memory as they were dying of thirst in the desert

### B. God was proving Israel in the wilderness

1. God had led them into the desert where they had no water to drink, for a purpose – to prove them (15:25)
2. Over the next forty years he would continue to prove them (Deuteronomy 8:2)
3. The nation had just sung "The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." (Exodus 15:2)
4. But would they still be singing that Jehovah was their God and their strength when faced with a desperate situation?
5. How easy and natural it is to sing hymns of praise to God when all is going well – the test of our faith is whether we continue to sing of our confidence in God in the midst of our trials (cf. Acts 16:25)
6. At the bitter waters of Marah, as God tested their trust in him, Israel's confidence turned to complaining, their praise turned to murmuring – murmuring not only against Moses, but against God himself

### C. God's design in trials

1. God takes us from our ease and complacency, and brings us into a place of distress and trouble to expose where our faith truly lies – in God or in something else
2. Broadly speaking, all people are tried in this way, and sadly most will harden themselves against God in their trial, rather than submit to him (2 Chronicles 16:12; Jeremiah 5:3; Amos 4:6,11; Haggai 2:17; Revelation 9:20-21; 16:8-9)
3. Many professing Christians are like the stony ground hearers who joyfully receive the word, but when tribulation arises they are offended, proving they have no root – their faith was a mere outward show (Matthew 13:20-21)
4. For the true Christian, the trial of faith is “much more precious than of gold that perisheth” (1 Peter 1:7)
  - a. It proves the genuineness of our faith
  - b. It purifies the heart and life of those exercised by trials (Job 23:10)
  - c. It perfects and matures spiritually (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:3-4)
5. God put those bitter water there, and purposefully led Israel to it – the same Shepherd who leads his sheep to the green pastures and still waters (Psalm 23:1-3), also leads to the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4) in order that we might properly know his presence and comfort

## III. JEHOVAH-RAPHA HEALS HIS PEOPLE

### A. God heard Moses' cry

1. Though the children of Israel murmured, Moses acted differently – he cried unto God on behalf of the people
2. How long had they thirsted, fretted, complained and searched for a solution, while the help of God was only a humble cry away?

3. How long do we wallow in our distresses when the help of God is only a humble cry a way?
  4. No sooner had Moses cried than God provided the means of healing
- B. God is the Almighty Healer (Deuteronomy 32:39; Psalm 30:2; 103:3; 147:3; Hosea 6:1)
1. This healing (*rapha*) is used of both *physical* (2 Chronicles 7:14; Ezekiel 34:4) and *spiritual* healing (2 Chronicles 30:20; Psalm 41:4; Jeremiah 3:22; 17:14)
  2. In promising Israel healing, God said, "I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians"
  3. The plagues upon Egypt were a judgment upon them for their sin, and God promised Israel that if they were obedient, he would preserve them from such judgments
  4. Contrary to modern-day Charismatic teaching, while God is able to heal physically today, and may choose to do so, it is not always God's will to heal
    - a. The apostolic sign-gift (2 Corinthians 12:12) of healing was given to confirm the word the apostles preached during the period the New Testament was being completed (Mark 16:17-20)
    - b. Over time, as the New Testament neared completion, this sign-gift passed away, so that later in Paul's ministry, he is not performing healings as in his early ministry (1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20)
    - c. Paul himself was afflicted by a thorn in his flesh, and God did not grant his prayer to be delivered from it, but rather gave him grace to endure his trial (2 Corinthians 12:9)
    - d. We ought to pray earnestly to God when afflicted by sickness and disease, and be content with his will for us – whether it is to heal, or whether it is to give us his all-sufficient grace in our affliction
- C. The Lord Jesus Christ is pictured in the healing of Marah

1. Christ came into this world performing miracles of healing all who were diseased, even raising the dead to life (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-21)
2. These were proofs he was the Messiah, that he was in fact, Jehovah-Rapha (John 10:24-25; 37-38)
3. But his chief work of healing is not physical, but spiritual – he is the Great Physician of the soul (Matthew 9:12-)
4. When Moses cried to the LORD, the LORD showed him a tree, and it was through this tree that healing came
5. This tree pictures the cross of Christ, which brought sweetness from bitterness, and brought life from death
6. “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)
  - a. This tree was provided by God
  - b. This tree was accessible to all
  - c. This tree was effective to save
7. “A type of Christ’s sweet cross, and easy yoke, that sweeteneth and facilitateth all our light afflictions. The Jewish doctors tell us that this tree was bitter, and give us this note; It is the manner of the blessed God to sweeten that which is bitter by that which is bitter.” (John Trapp)
8. Israel is a picture of lost humanity – thirsting and seeking for something, anything to quench that thirst, and finding only bitter water; nothing brings satisfaction, only disappointment
9. But as the Israelites, in their desperate need, cried to God for help, and were shown the tree of healing, so too, when a sinner comes to understand their true state as a lost, condemned rebel against God, with only the judgment of hell awaiting, he cries “What must I do to be saved?”, and the Lord shows him the cross where the bleeding Saviour died for his sins, and all he must do is turn to him in faith to receive the living waters, to receive healing

10. This is the true healing we need – the healing of the soul

11. The bitterness of sin, guilt, condemnation and hopelessness, is replaced by the sweetness of pardon, peace, joy, and the indwelling Holy Spirit

## **CONCLUSION**

1. Following the healing of the waters at Marah, the Israelites came to a place called Elim, “where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees”
2. And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters. (Exodus 15:27)
3. This was a place of rest and comfort, free of trouble
4. “Israel had no miracle at Elim. Wells and palm trees they had; but they had no miracle there, no miraculous change of the bitter into the sweet; and they had no statute, and no ordinance, and no promise, and no new revelation of God, and no new name for Jehovah there.” (Spurgeon)
5. We would prefer Elim with its ease and plenitude, but what we need is Marah with its hardship and testing, for that is where God’s power is revealed to us and in us
6. What is your response to the bitter experiences of life?
7. Do you forget God’s past deliverances and murmur as the children of Israel?
8. Or do you cry unto God as Moses?
9. Jehovah-Rapha is the Shepherd who “restoreth my soul” (Psalm 23:3)
10. Is your soul in a weak and sickly state, run down by sin, the world and the trials of life?
11. Then cry out in humble faith to Jehovah-Rapha – “the LORD that healeth thee”