

## Under Attack By The Amalekites

**Mark Schindler**

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On this 35th day of the 50-day count of Pentecost, the fifth of the seven Sabbaths, I want to turn to something that we are going to look at in Exodus the 17th chapter that would have happened during these days. As a matter of fact, we are going to be spending time talking about things that did happen during these days, although Israel was not to start the count of Pentecost until after the first fruits of their crops in the land. We certainly have been given the command from God to start our count to Pentecost with the wave sheaf and so we can learn some valuable things from this.

So, if you will turn with me to Exodus 17, we are going to pick it up in verse 8.

**Exodus 17:8-16** Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and one on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; for he said, "Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

For those of you who like titles to keep you focused towards the beginning of a sermon, the title of this sermon is "Under Attack by the Amalekites." It is here under the attack by the Amalekites, Joshua suddenly comes into the picture. Although Joshua is not the main focus of this sermon, he is going to be a significant part of it towards the end. But as I have been thinking more about this sermon and putting it together, we need to examine Joshua's part in all of this more completely in another sermon. But for right now, I would like you to note that God makes an obvious declaration here in these verses purposely directed at Joshua, perhaps as God was preparing him for the work he would have him do later on.

Nancy and I were talking about this this morning, and I said, "It's remarkable." It is like I said, I do not want to get into Joshua. "There is one man that God was preparing out of millions that made it into the Promised Land." How seriously do we take our preparation time? Again in verse 14 we read, "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.'" As I said, another time we need to bring Joshua back into this and the wonderful work that he did. But for right now I would like us to concentrate on a few other things that we can learn through these chapters.

It is interesting that the first encounter with people outside of Egypt after God had delivered Israel through the Red Sea, was the surprise attack on the stragglers at the back of the line by the Amalekites. Perhaps within this God is giving a valuable lesson for us to consider during our deliverance from this world as we count the days to Pentecost. In between the crossing of the Red Sea and the giving of the law at Sinai on Pentecost, the Israelites were immediately faced with several hardships as tests from God (that we will take a look at in a minute), culminating with a serious surprise attack by those people who inhabited the land through which they began their journey.

Although we are told these are tests from God, which I am sure God used to reveal who was with Him and who was against Him, but not just for His own satisfaction, but for the Israelites themselves to measure the depth of their own understanding regarding who had delivered them. As we will see in a few minutes, these tests were also declarations of the name of God and his various attributes. It is interesting that Richard ended his sermon last week,

before going to Numbers, with Psalm 23, and that Ronny Graham has spent so much time over the past few months in the psalm of David, who understood his shepherd. Because hopefully, as we are going to see in a few minutes, Psalm 23 and God declaring His name to those He had just delivered is intrinsically woven into these few chapters recorded as Israel's walk began, going from the Red Sea and giving of the law to Sinai 50 days later.

Brethren, please keep in mind all that happened to them was for us now to better follow our journey with God. As a matter of fact, before going any farther, I think it would be a good idea for us to review God's inspired words to the apostle Paul that declares this to us. So please turn with me back to I Corinthians the 10th chapter and we will be starting right there in verse 1.

**I Corinthians 10:1-13** Moreover, brethren [Paul writes], I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it was written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Now if we go back to Exodus, and I want you to keep in mind a lot of those things that Paul noted there of the terrible destruction that Israel suffered, it was not during the time we are going to be talking about. It was after they left Sinai, and they are wandering. What we are going to talk about today was what God had blessed them with, had given them as to get them ready for their journey. I do not doubt that what we are about to look at as it is written in these few chapters in Exodus was actually a series of events in chronological order during the days we now count to Pentecost. I am convinced, among other things, God laid it out this way for us to consider as those who would be following His command to count the days and the Sabbaths from the wave sheaf offering to Pentecost.

It is always important for us to remember that our great God's ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts, but He certainly wants us to examine His Word so that we can begin to understand what are His thoughts and ways, even though we look through a glass darkly. I am certain, because God's Word is so multifaceted, that what we are going to examine today is not the only things to consider in faithfully counting to Pentecost, but we must use this life and time that God has given to help us on our journey through this life as the precious gift that God has given to us to know Him and His ways as He sees fit in the time He wishes to do it.

With all this in mind, let us turn back to Exodus, as I said, and this time we are going to go to Exodus 15, because we are going to read a good section of what Ronny referred to as the Song of Moses. Ronny and I did not talk about this, and I will not read the whole song. But it is a marvelous song, and I will read parts of it.

The Israelites had been delivered by the mighty hand of God from what was probably the most powerful nation on the face of the earth at the time, and God had just completely brought Egypt to its knees. The Israelites had clearly witnessed our great God's power and authority that was beyond anything that any human being could ever have done. He had destroyed not only Egypt but exposed their gods for the impure sham they were.

But as we go through this, always remember that these generations of Israelites that had been delivered really did not know the true God. But they saw him as a genie, as one of the genie-in-the-bottle gods of Egypt that were

part of their worldview. And they transferred this thinking towards the true God. But this is not what we should see through these things.

So we will begin in chapter 15, with Moses's song of praise to the great God who had just delivered them, recounting the incredible work that only God could do on their behalf. All Israel had witnessed His mighty and unimpeded work on their behalf. As I said, we are not going to read through the whole song, but I recommend, as Ronny did, that you go back and read this soaring song of Moses and the majestic beauty of God.

**Exodus 15:1-8** Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has cast into the sea; his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them; they sank to the bottom like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy to pieces. And in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You; You sent forth in Your wrath; it consumed them like stubble. And with the blast of Your nostrils the waters were gathered together; the flood stood upright like a heap; the depths congealed in the heart of the sea.

**Exodus 15:11-16** "Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out Your right hand; the earth swallowed them. You in Your mercy have led forth the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation. The people will hear and be afraid; sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling will take hold of them; all the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. Fear

and dread will fall on them; by the greatness of Your arm they will be as still as stone, till Your people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over whom You have purchased.

**Exodus 15:18** "The Lord shall reign forever and ever."

And then finally in verse 20 Miriam joins in.

**Exodus 15:20-21** Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them [she echoed Moses' words]: "Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and the rider He has thrown into the sea!"

Brethren, I want us to consider what we have just read here from the Israelites' perspective as Moses and the Israelites themselves saying soaring words of praise to the power and majesty of our great God. And also keep in mind their own—this is very important—their own perceived invincibility as they sang in verse 14,

**Exodus 15:14-16** "The people [of the lands ahead of them] will hear and be afraid. Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling will take hold of them; and all the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. Fear and dread will fall on them; by the greatness of Your arm they will be as still as stone."

And then of course Miriam and the women in the victory dance echoed Moses' words singing to the Lord, "He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"

With these words of victory and song and dance, the newly redeemed slaves delivered from the hand of the mightiest nation on the face of the earth under the invincible hand of God, were of the mindset that nothing could stop them because God's great hand was always on their side. He would constantly be delivering them. They could consider themselves invincible.

These are soaring words, and they should be part of our perception of our great God. But I also want us to note that although Moses' words tell us that everyone that heard about what happened would be fearing and trembling in their boots because Israel was moving forward under the power and the mighty hand of God's cloud, and they were unbeatable. Brethren, there is nothing that can stop God from doing what He wants to do moving forward, but He immediately gives us a very important lesson that we need to continue to take with us in our journey.

God is not a genie in a bottle. He is not someone there to merely deliver us physically from our bonds and our shackles, but He is in the process through our proper fear and trembling, through testing and deliverance throughout our time, to create in us the mind that truly understands that our God *is* God and He is always with us. As Martin so perfectly stated a number of weeks ago at the end of his sermon and was echoed by David Maas the following week, we do not see the end of the path we think we see. But we walk with Someone who does see the end, and we can be assured that no matter what we go through, He will see us through to the end as long as we walk with Him.

Within this, let us now read the next few verses in Exodus 15.

**Exodus 15:22-23** So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"

Three days out and in great thirst they arrived at Marah and they found water to be so bitter they could not drink it and they complained vehemently against Moses. Then in the middle of verse 25 of chapter 15 we read,

**Exodus 15:25-26** There He [God] made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His

sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you."

I want us to stop and consider the very first tests and deliverance that God gave to Israel. Just three days after they sang that soaring song of praise to God and considered themselves invincible, they lost sight of the only One who truly was their deliverer because they never really set Him and His way apart from the gods of Egypt. Brethren, I would really like us to consider how merciful was God and His treatment of Israel at the first place of testing. They had said in a mindset that God was a genie in a bottle like the gods of Egypt. Our God, our great God, had just brought down judgment on all the gods that Egypt worshipped in bringing diseases down on the cattle, the horses, the donkeys, and even destroying the supposed divinity of the Pharaoh himself. All that represented the various gods of Egypt were destroyed and made impure before their eyes and the eyes of the Egyptians and all the plagues that God brought on them. This was all done in the sight of the Israelites, as I said. But they still really did not understand *who* they were dealing with.

So the first thing God did, in His mercy, was to make a statute and an ordinance regarding the real healing and strength, both physically and spiritually, that could only come through Him. But He laid out a condition that went hand-in-hand with learning to be just like Him and learning to live as He lives in accord with His commandments. So here we see a valuable lesson for ourselves. In order to be healthy and whole, by the grace of God, we need to be responding and carefully learning to live His law as our way of life if we want to be like Him and learning to live as He lives. If we want to be healed we must be constantly examining our own conduct and walk through this life as it might not be going along with His Word. This is important for us, brethren.

God is teaching us a lesson here. Here in Exodus 15, we see God brought them to the place of bitter water to test them. He brought them here in mercy to begin to move them beyond a strictly emotional, self-serving high to begin to better connect the dots as He proclaimed His name as healer. And their healing and ours is a tool to bring us closer to Him in holiness by carefully looking at the circumstances of our lives to make sure we are in line with

God's Word. By connecting their physical thirst for water with healing, He clearly connected learning and living His Word to their health spiritually and physically. Because their strength would always depend on Him. By His power and His might they were always going to be satisfied as they learned to live His Word.

Perhaps during these days of our individual count to Pentecost, we should be more focused on our submission to His Word in all things and how clearly it is tied to our healing, both physically and spiritually, so that we can be learning, leading lives as unblemished sacrifices for His glory.

Please hold your finger there in Exodus again and turn with me back to Psalm 103 and we will be picking it up in verse 1. Brethren, I am sure you have noted that two of these things, God is our healer in Exodus 15 and Psalm 103, are mentioned in the letter that we usually send out with the anointed cloths. Because this is who our God is, and this is how we need to be carefully thinking about things as we follow His Word.

**Psalm 103:1-14** Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like eagles. The Lord executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He has made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy towards those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

**Psalm 103:17-18** But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to the

children's children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.

In His mercy and before Israel even went out beyond Sinai for their journey through the wilderness, He led them to a place of bitter waters, not as punishment, but as a place for Him to declare His name as the One who not only delivered them, but was the One who would heal their embedded diseases from their former circumstances. It was here and at this place He miraculously declared His name as their healer. But in order for that healing to continue, they needed to be learning to live His every word. Of course, we know through their wilderness wanderings after receiving His commands at Sinai, they suffered severe consequences for failing to live by His word as they continued to consider our great God as they thought of the gods of Egypt. They failed to faithfully tie the physical and the spiritual healing that they needed to the purity that comes with faithful obedience to His word.

Brethren, this may be one of our important lessons as we go through this count to Pentecost. Do we continue the self-examination of our actions and faithful response to God's name as our healer, both spiritually and physically? God always needs to be the One that we go to for the ultimate healing that only can come through Him as He teaches us to learn to live as He lives.

We live in a time where there is so much disease and suffering. There is much pain and sorrow, but it is for our good because God is giving us the opportunity to develop our relationship with Him within His mercy. His great desire is to heal us no matter what kind of problems we are going through, but it is all tied to obedience, our obedience to His Word, as well as we can understand it through faithful study and prayer. We must be learning the lesson as we use God's Holy Spirit, faithfully trusting Him as our healer. This is a lesson that those early generations that were raised within a genie-in-the-bottle culture of gods, the gods of Egypt, they never got it through their heads. We must be learning to live as God lives, to be holy as He is holy. And that only comes through Jesus Christ.

With this in mind, I would like us to turn to the book of John. We are going to be picking it up in John 5 and we will be starting right there in verse 1.

**John 5:1-9** After this there was a feast of the Jews, and the Jews went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I'm coming, another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed, and walk." And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.

**John 5:12-14** Then they asked him [the Pharisees asked the man], "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?" But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

It is interesting to me that this miracle of healing is recorded by the Sheep's Gate at the Temple and at the pool of Bethesda. Bethesda means house of mercy, house of pouring. By these waters, just like by the waters of Marah, God showed His mercy, where He changed the bitter waters to refreshing waters of healing. And by the same pool known as Mercy, Jesus Christ mercifully healed this man. I have always wondered about this scripture because I know the section from the middle of verse 3 through verse 4 tells us that there was an angel that came down to stir the waters, and the people hustled over there to get in the water first. Commentators claim this whole section is not in the original manuscript, which I think is the truth.

I found this interesting on several levels. Number one, God typically in His mercy does not make it a race to push someone out of the way to get ahead of him for healing. Perhaps what we ought to learn here is the carelessness,

the hardheartedness of the people standing around who did nothing to help this man. I do not know. Or perhaps it is for us to see that Israel at the time of Jesus Christ had the same genie-in-a-bottle approach to our great God as Israel did coming out of Egypt, superstitiously looking at a pool for the healing that only God can give. Their minds were so perverted by physical things around them they could not even see God in the flesh among them.

But please note that the man was not healed by being put into the water. He was healed by following the word of Jesus Christ, who ultimately said, when he found him again in verse 14, "And He said to him, 'See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.'" Brethren, is this something we should be thinking more deeply about ourselves as we count these days to Pentecost? Because circumstances at Marah happened within these days. First, how much do we sincerely believe that God is our healer? This is not to say that there are gifted people that can help us as we go through our times and trials, and that we should not seek them out because God did give gifts to different people for different things. But also, ultimately, our focus needs to be with our faith and trust in the only One who can heal us and in the fact that only God knows us well enough to give us the healing we need when we need it. But we always need to be examining ourselves as to whether we are in line with His Word. And then after we are healed, we go and sin no more.

Please turn with me now to James the 5th chapter because we have important instructions here from God Himself concerning our healing within these verses. I want to show you that there is two significant questions we can be asking ourselves during the count of Pentecost considering God's first declaration of His name to Israel as they came through the Red Sea. He is our healer. Are we like the Israelites who focused on the physical and lost sight of God? Coming out of Egypt, they thought God was there to do their bidding, but God in His mercy carefully brought them to a place of bitter water and miraculously changed it to refreshing water in order to declare that He was their healer, and as their healer, their responsibility was to walk continuously with the One who healed them.

**James 5:13-16** Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over

him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

As we count this time to Pentecost, we need to ask ourselves, are we looking at God as a genie-in-a-bottle approach? Or are we faithfully following God's Word, as it is stated here, trying to teach us to learn to live His way of life and the process that it takes to walk the same way He walks with implicit trust as Jesus Christ had in the Father? And implicit trust that builds in us the same faith as Abraham, the father of the faithful.

The second thing, and perhaps just as important, seems to appear there in verse 16. It says, "Confess your faults to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Is it possible that the more fervently we pray for the healing of others with our focus away from ourselves, that we ourselves will be healed?

Herbert Armstrong always put life into a simple perspective. There are two ways of life. There is the way of get and the way of give, and God's way is always a way of give, a way of life that is focused on outgoing concern. And God's desire for us is to learn to have that same way of life in ours. Perhaps this is why His first name that He revealed to Israel was the one that took the most of His own outgoing concern, the ultimate healing of the breach through the sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ. By His stripes we are healed. You know, John Ritenbaugh once said in a sermon something that has always stuck in my mind. As a matter of fact, we have got it on a plaque downstairs in the family room. John said, "If you learn the law of God, motivated by the love of God, it will produce the life of God." Brethren, love is the keeping of God's law that teaches us to live as our great God lives with focus away from ourselves. This is what our great God, our healer, has desired for us so that we can be healed physically and spiritually.

With this in mind, let us go back to Exodus 15 again. We will pick up verse 27. It says there,

**Exodus 15:27** Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.

Here in verse 27 we see another one of God's names He revealed to Israel that we should be considering during our personal count to Pentecost. Remember, all these things happened as God was mercifully preparing them for their walk beyond Sinai. There is an indication that the 12 wells of water and the 70 palm trees indicate God's providential care, the 12 wells providing for each of the 12 tribes and the 70 palm trees representing 70 elders and what God gives us as gifts to provide for His people. Regarding this verse, I found Kyle Delitzsch's commentary to give a good abstract of what I have seen in all the other reference material I went through. Kyle Delitzsch's commentary writes:

Elim, the next place of encampment, inasmuch as this spot with its plentiful supply of comparatively good water and its luxuriance of palms, tamarisks, acacias, and tall grass, which cause it to be selected even now as one of the principal halting places between Suez and Sinai, quite answers to Elim with its 12 wells of water and 70 palm trees. It is true the distance from Marah is short, but the encampments of such a procession as that of the Israelites are always regulated by a supply of water. Both Baumgarten and Kurtz have found in Elim a place expressly prepared for Israel, from its bearing stamp of the nation in the number of wells and palms, a well for every tribe and the shade of the palm tree for the tent of each of the elders. But although the number of wells corresponds to the 12 tribes of Israel, the number of elders was much larger than that of the palms. But with this one fact alone, beyond all doubt, namely that at Elim, this lovely oasis in a barren desert, Israel was to learn how the Lord could make His people lie down in green pastures and lead them beside still waters, even in the barren desert of this life.

Again, we need to think about our great God more carefully as our provider. How much is He giving us and how much do we appreciate it? And perhaps during this count to Pentecost is a good time to reconsider these things. Please keep in mind, brethren, that the whole purpose of this sermon today is

to consider the things God did give to Israel to prepare them for their journey ahead of them after Sinai. Then for those who have God's Holy Spirit, more importantly, to consider the bigger picture of what God expects from us on our journey within our various tests and trials. They were given as our learning tools upon whom the end of the age has come (as Ronny said). As hard as it is, all things are for good to those who love God and are the called according to His purpose.

So now, as we continue on, I am going to try to go a bit more quickly in the rest of the sermon than I had intended, but there are a couple of other very important things that God gives us to think about during the Pentecost count. So we are going to pick up this now in Exodus, the 16th chapter, starting in verse 1. Remember, all these things happen historically during this time that we are counting.

**Exodus 16:1-7** And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came into the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My way or not. And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, "At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt. And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord; for He hears your complaints against the Lord. But what are we, that you complain against us?"

**Exodus 16:11-13** And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall

be filled with bread. And you shall know that I am the Lord your God." So it was that the quails came in the evening and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp.

We see here again that those who had been delivered from God by the mightiest of hands, His hand, and He had provided for them in the wilderness, again were complaining into the second month. We also see in God's mercy that He granted their requests for what they physically desired, but He also began to give them the most important lesson that they would have with them day by day, week by week for nearly 40 years. As it says in verse chapter 16, verse 4, the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not."

Brethren, I want to remind us again that all that took place between the Red Sea and Sinai in a time when God mercifully showed all those former slaves that He could deliver them and give them whatever provisions they wanted physically. This all took place at that time, but only in order for them to see that He was *the* God and not just a genie in the bottle. He and He alone was the One who could teach them to learn to live the abundant life that only He can give. He was showing them, He is the Creator. And the time that they had was time they should be well spent to become holy, as He is holy.

How much do we lust after the things of this earth that perhaps God is giving as a blessing at times? But more importantly, the point specifically, how carefully do we appreciate the wonderful opportunity He has given to know Him as Creator through His Sabbath rest? We will not turn there for lack of time, but remember early on when we were talking about Jesus' healing the man by the pool at Bethesda in His mercy and commanding him to go and sin no more. You remember I made the point of noting the Pharisees were more concerned about what the man was up doing carrying a thing, than about the mercy that Jesus Christ had shown in healing the man who could not get any help apart from Christ. Nancy and I were talking about this also this morning. You know, we think about this, but how deeply do we think about these things? This man had been a paralytic for 38 years, and I know how much it hurts sometimes from the different pains and suffering. Was this man in constant anguish? And in His mercy, Jesus Christ lifted down His hand and told Him on the Sabbath to get up, carry his pallet, and sin no

more. But the Pharisees were only concerned with breaking a law that they made.

It might be good during this count to Pentecost and especially considering the seven Sabbaths of the count, to spend more time than usual to consider what a gift we have been given, to know the same One who created this Sabbath in the first place: the Word, who became God in the flesh, and He never changed His Sabbath or the holy days to any other. He gave it as an incredible gift for us to use thoughtfully. Because within it He is giving us the opportunity to learn to think as He thinks and act as He acts. It may be a good time for us to reassess the way we observe the Sabbath today, as followers of the Lord of the Sabbath with His Holy Spirit working within us.

The Sabbath was created and remains a time that has been sanctified, set apart by God, and therefore it is not common time as the other six days of the week which God has given us to do all our routine work. It is not a time for going about business as usual nor engaging in the normal activities of life that occupy our discretionary time like TVs or concerts or ball games, volleyball, hobbies, whatever it is. God's holy Sabbath is actually a gift from Him to come out of this hectic business of life, to spend more focused time drawing closer to Him in extra Bible study, prayer, meditation, as well as drawing closer to those whom He has called into the Body of Christ. It is also, as Jesus Christ clearly showed, a time for acts of mercy and kindness as they present themselves, most especially toward the brethren.

God gives very clear but general direction concerning the importance of treating this time that He has sanctified very differently from the other days of the week in order to please Him. However, in the Church of the Great God, we do not issue a series of rules and regulations as the Pharisees did but rather try to point to the general instructions God has given how to make this holy time to be in unity with Him. A major Sabbath blessing is in that we are to contribute ourselves to His holy time in thoughtfully keeping it according to His Word in the best way to please Him and not ourselves. God does not want His Sabbath limited by a list of Pharisaical do's and don'ts, but He does expect each of us individually to carefully consider what is in line with His will and is pleasing to him. Of course, Isaiah 58:13-14 is important to consider here, and I will just read it for you.

**Isaiah 58:13-14** "If you turn your foot away from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken."

As I have been saying, brethren, I have been trying to get us to relate our own experiences with the gift given us through God's Holy Spirit to this set of circumstances that God gave in His mercy to test and prepare Israel so that they could know His name and that He was not to be treated like any of the gods of Egypt. God expects much more from us today, as we recognize how much more important He is than the gods of the world, whatever they may be.

Again, this morning, Nancy and I were talking about this, and when Moses, through the preparation time that he had, he too came out of Egypt. Although Aaron and Joshua, I guess, and Miriam, they had stayed there all those years, so they were still subject to that circumstance, and we see some pretty crazy things that even Aaron did. But Moses had been prepared so that when he came to the burning bush, God did not give him different specific names that we are talking about right now, the healer, provider. What He told him was, "I am." And that is all He needed to tell Moses. Moses still was stumbling and said, how can I get through this thing? I am not a man of clean lips. But Moses had been through training for 40 years to take on this role. And when God explained to Moses who He was, Moses was ready to hear that He was the God who is God.

With this in mind, let us move to the next test. An example where God again proclaims one of His names.

**Exodus 17:1-6** Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink [again]. Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may

drink." So Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord?" And the people thirsted for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why is it that you have brought us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!" And the Lord said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of all the elders of Israel.

Notice that Israel had hardheartedness and a mindset that they had developed in Egypt. And their final thing was,

**Exodus 17:7** "Is the Lord among us or not?"

And this brings us to God's most impressive answer, and the title of the sermon. Then we go to verse 8 again. This is God's answer to them, is He with us or not? So we are going to read again from 8 through 16, because here God literally is giving them the answer that He is always present and also the other name, that He is their banner.

**Exodus 17:8-16** Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand up on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hands, Amalek prevailed.

And we read the rest of that. And then we come to the end it says that at the going down of the sun, so Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

Is it possible that God wants us to note the first attack within weeks of His miraculous deliverance? It is for us to warily consider how Satan does the same thing with those whom God has delivered miraculously from this world, to work with Him in spirit and in truth. Satan turns to attack those whom Jesus Christ is leading through this wilderness, knowing he cannot directly attack Christ, who has already won the battle. So he goes after those whom Christ has delivered and is leading. In his continued effort to disrupt God's plan for creating all men in His image and likeness, he has unleashed his power first against those who are the weakest. But how well are we doing to lift one another up as we continue the journey together within the gifts that God has given us, always understanding that God is our healer, our deliverer?

I would like to cite some comments that Richard Ritenbaugh made concerning the attack of the Amalekites, but as I am reading the following, I would like you to consider the Amalekites as a type of Satan and his minions set to disrupt God's plan and purpose for you personally as we continue this journey. Richard wrote the following in his 2007 Forerunner article, "All About Edom (Part Two)." Richard said,

Though Esau himself was full of bitter hatred, and Ishmael is described as a wild man, Amalek seems to have been the worst of the Edomite-related peoples. The Bible records that even God has a special enmity for Amalek, saying in Exodus 17:16, "Because the Lord has sworn, the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." What is it about Amalek that turns God against them? The story begins as the Israelites are fleeing from Egypt, having just crossed the Red Sea, as Exodus 17:8 chronicles, that now Amalek fought with Israel at Rephidim. Evidently the Amalekites had heard of Egypt's total defeat at the Red Sea and decided to take advantage of its unusually more powerful neighbor's weakness. Between them and their prize, however, walked a strung out line of Israelite wanderers who seemed to be not only laden with Egyptian loot but also easy pickings. Deuteronomy 25:17 fills out the story. "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary and did not fear God."

The Amalekites, not daring to take on the main host of Israel, attacked the tail end of the line where the slow and the weak were plodding along. Yet as Moses notes, the Amalekites did not include God in their calculations.

I want to add another thing here, brethren. Please consider that through all these tests and trials we are talking about, never once did God show His wrath for them being disobedient or complaining because He was trying to prepare them for what was ahead of them. And as we know, how many of them were scattered across the wilderness over 40 years because they did not listen.

Richard continued,

Moses commanded Joshua to select men to fight, and the Israelites met the Amalekites in battle. The result of this seesaw battle appears in Exodus 17:13-16. Forty years later, when Israel is about to cross over Jordan, God reminds Israel of Amalek's perfidious act and charges them, "Therefore, it shall be when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your enemies all around in the land which the Lord your God has given you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heaven. You shall not forget." The Amalekites appear again in the well-known episode which God instructed King Saul to carry out His command, "Thus says the Lord, 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed them on the way when he came out of Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them, but kill both man and women, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'"

And then Richard continues,

However, despite winning the battle, Saul did not follow God's instructions completely. But Saul and his people spared Agag, king of the Amalekites, and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good as far as they could see, and were unwilling to destroy them. But everything despised and worthless,

they utterly destroyed. God sent the prophet Samuel to tell Saul that he had rejected him as king, as well as to execute Agag. Obviously, some Amalekites escaped Saul's army. Five centuries later, as recorded in Esther, an evil man named Haman plotted genocide against the Jews in Persia during the reign of Xerxes. Haman was the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, probably directly descended from the Amalekite king that Samuel killed.

Richard finishes,

These accounts relate the story of trickery, terrorism, and underhandedness that the Amalekites seemed to use perpetually. One can only conclude that these tactics are passed from generation to generation, becoming a hereditary trait. God has recorded these episodes to indicate to us how Amalek historically treats Israel. If a confederacy is formed against Israel, the Amalekites will be part of it, and they will be eager to use any means possible to bring her down.

Remember, brethren, we are looking at this as God's warning us about Satan's attacks.

I would like us now to turn to those instructions that God had given to King Saul that Richard mentioned, because within it, considering the lessons that we should be thinking about during this fifty-day count to Pentecost, there is another one final clear message to us within this story of King Saul and his failure to do what he was supposed to do. Turn with me now to I Samuel the 15th chapter, verse 1.

**I Samuel 15:1-3** Samuel also said to Saul, "The Lord sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them.'

Brethren, keep in mind we are thinking here along the lines that this represents Satan and our need to destroy everything that he is giving in this world that will tear us away from God.

**I Samuel 15:3-5** But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'" So Saul gathered the people together and numbered them in Gilgal. two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah. Then Saul came to the city of Amalek, and lay in wait in the valley.

**I Samuel 15:7-11** And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is the east of Egypt. He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and the oxen, the fatlings of lambs and all that was good [at least, I add, good in their eyes], and they were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, they utterly destroyed. Now the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments."

**I Samuel 15:13-23** Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord." But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen I hear?" And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." Then Samuel said to Saul, "Be quiet! And I will tell you what the Lord said to me last night." And he said to him, "Speak on." So Samuel said, "When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel? Now the Lord sent you on a mission and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' Why then did you not obey the voice of

the Lord? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the Lord?"

And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took the plunder, sheep and the oxen, the best things which they should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal." So Samuel said, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king."

Brethren, God has set us on a mission under His banner. He is our healer. And under His providential care, we are to totally destroy Satan's influence in our lives by staying as close to Jesus Christ as we can, while learning and living His commandments with outgoing concern for one another for the glory of God.

Through the remainder of our personal count to Pentecost, I think it would behoove us to carefully read and consider what God did in these 50 days between His deliverance of Israel from Egypt and His glorious presence at Sinai, as recorded in these chapters in Exodus 15 to 18. Because God was giving very clear instructions through them to those whom He has called to intimately know Him and walk with Him in this wilderness journey we have now. But being led in the Spirit and the indwelling of the Father and the Son, we must complete our mission, destroying all those other things.

I had intended to go back again to Moses' song in Exodus 15, but for lack of time, I want you to turn to one final scripture. And then you can go back (like Ronny suggested, and I did it again), to Exodus 15, the glorious song of God. But we will end in Psalm 18 by King David who delighted God as opposed to Saul. We are going to be picking up right there in verse 1.

**Psalm 18:1-6** I will love You, O Lord, my strength. [Remember, brethren, all things are good, for those who love God are called according to His purpose.] The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies. The pangs of death surround me, the floods of ungodliness made me afraid. The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and I cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, even to His ears.

**Psalm 18:16-19** He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from the strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support. He also brought me out into the broad place; He delivered me because He delighted in me.

**Psalm 18:28-30** For You will light my lamp; the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness. For by You I can run against a troop, by my God I can leap over a wall. As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.

Brethren, we delight Him as we faithfully trust Him. Let us continue to ask these questions of ourselves and think about these things as we approach that wonderful day of Pentecost where God's Holy Spirit was given to the Body of Christ that moves us today.