

JEHOVAH-ROPHE

THE NAME **Jehovah-rophe means Jehovah heals**. It is the second of the compound names of Jehovah. The name Jehovah-jireh arose out of the incident of Jehovah's provision of a substitute in place of Isaac whom He had commanded Abraham to sacrifice upon the altar. We learned that it stands for Jehovah's great provision for man's redemption in the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, and who was offered up on the very spot where Abraham had predicted—"In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen" -that is, Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, the scene of Calvary.

There is a wonderful and significant order in these compound names of Jehovah as they appear in the Scriptures (in contrast to the waste and desolation which certain critics have wrought upon the Scriptures; whose "assured results" have only obscured the light for those who accept them). In these names there is a progressive revelation of Jehovah meeting every need as it arises in the experience of His redeemed people-saving, sustaining, strengthening, sanctifying, and so on; and not only for the redeemed of that day but for God's saints in all ages. The things that happened to Israel, the apostle Paul tells us, were our examples (1 Cor. 10:6).

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come," he again remarks in 1 Corinthians 10: 11.

For this name of God, Jehovah-rophe, arises out of one of Israel's earliest experiences in the wilderness as told in Exodus 15:22-26. Indeed it was their first experience after the crossing of the Red Sea and the singing of the great song of triumph. But the same chapter which records Israel's triumphant song also records the first murmurings of discontent and bitterness. In Exodus 15:22 we read: "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." In the first flush of victory they went along joyfully the first day, and perhaps even the second day. But the way was hot and weary, and their water was giving out. The third day was well along and still there was

no water. Their throats were parched. They felt their plight becoming desperate. They forgot the might and mercy of the God who had so marvelously delivered them. In their anxiety and anger they murmured against Moses in bitter complaint. Then in verse 23: “And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah” (which means bitter). We can imagine their feelings of relief and joy as they first came in sight of this well, but what angry disillusionment when they find the waters bitter-an aggravation and a mockery of their thirst. They were maddened by this setback to their hope and expectation. What were they to do? Were they and their children to die there of thirst? Then God showed Moses a certain tree, which, when cast into the waters, turned them from bitterness to sweetness so that the people drank. They were refreshed and strengthened and heartened for the journey ahead. Their murmuring was turned to praise as their confidence in Jehovah and His servant Moses was renewed.

But it was not God who was there on trial. It was the people. He was proving them, and saying to them (v. 26) : “If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Jehovah thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight . . . I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am Jehovah that healeth thee”-that is, Jehovah -rophecha. The word rophe appears some sixty or seventy times in the Old Testament, always meaning to restore, to heal, to cure, or a physician, not only in the physical sense but in the moral and spiritual sense also. As out of Abraham’s trying experience in the mount there came a new and comforting name of God, Jehovah-jireh, so out of Israel’s bitter experience in the wilderness there comes another new and comforting name of God, Jehovahrophe, Jehovah heals. And Jehovah here pledged Himself on condition of their obedience to be always their Healer.

MAN’S NEED OF HEALING

Perhaps the first lesson we may draw from this story, since these events are all examples to us, is humanity’s need of healing, of a physician--even in a physical sense. The Old Testament reveals a number of instances in which God’s power is manifested, even though sometimes by natural

means, to heal the bodies of men. A notable instance is that of King Hezekiah who was not only healed but granted a definite additional span of years to live.

Nothing is more obvious and tragic and costly than the toll which sickness has exacted from human life and happiness. Disease is rife and often rampant the world over and has wrought untold havoc. It is no respecter of persons and stretches out its tentacles into all classes and communities and climes. It is a grim fact of human existence with which mankind has always had to cope and which has called for the exercise of its best brains, and effort, and resourcefulness. Terrible plagues and scourges have at times threatened the existence of an entire continent and have actually destroyed large portions of populations. Yes, mankind is physically sick and is in constant need of a physician, of healing. According to the Old Testament, God, Himself the one who heals, has used sickness and disease present in the earth as an instrument of judgment upon sin. For David's sin against Him, God offers him the choice of one of three punishments. The responsibility of the terrible choice involved is so great that David simply places it in the hands of God who chooses to bring pestilence (I Chron. 21: 12-14). The many hospitals and asylums and institutions everywhere, built and maintained at great cost, bear witness to the prevalence and tragedy of sickness in the world. What a mass of disease and sickness upon the earth when the Great Physician walked upon it in the flesh. Healing is certainly a great and noble and effective part of the missionary enterprise of the Church. How appropriate to the physical need of men is the name Jehovah-rophe!

But man's need of healing is even greater in the moral and spiritual realm. For here the ravages of sin are even more grim and obvious.

The tragedy and sorrow and pain and woe are even greater. In a figure of the physical the prophet Isaiah describes the moral and spiritual condition of his own people: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isa. 1:5, 6). The moral and spiritual sickness of mankind is an

open, running sore. The heart of man is desperately sick, says Jeremiah (17:9) . Herein is its fundamental disease-the sin which alienates it from God-the sin which manifests itself in open and secret evil of every sort, in high places and in low, which brought the judgment of Jehovah in times of old, and ever since, and must yet. How sorely mankind is in need of a healer, a physician! The world lies in the bitterness and bond of iniquity.

It is like the waters of Marah to which the children of Israel came in the wilderness. It is not sweetness and life but bitterness and death. Yet the antidote to its poison, the remedy for its sickness, is ever near-even at hand, as it was near the waters of Marah. For there God performed His miracle of healing by means of a tree growing nearby. It was the tree of God cast into the waters there that healed and sweetened them.

JEHOVAH THE HEALER IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This brings us to the second point, that Jehovah is the great Healer of men. He alone has the remedy that can heal the spirits of men. He is the remedy for the healing of man. And the Gospel is concerned primarily and chiefly with the moral and spiritual sickness and healing of mankind, for behind all the evils and physical sickness is sin. The importance of Marah in Israel's and human experience is attested by the fact that God gave Himself this new name here-Jehovah, who heals. The significance of the name Jehovah must be recalled here as "used in connection with beings who can apprehend and appreciate the Infinite." Therefore this name first appears in connection with His dealings with men. We learned that the title Jehovah and its use suggest moral and spiritual attributes in God-righteousness, holiness, love; that He holds man, created in the image of God, responsible for such moral and spiritual qualities. Man's sin and fall therefore called forth the judgment of Jehovah. But the love of Jehovah triumphs over judgment in providing a redemption, as we saw in the name Jehovah-jireh. So, too, the One who heals from the sin which mars and corrupts mankind is again Jehovah, as distinguished from His other names.

Now Marah may stand for disappointment and bitter experiences in the life of God's children, who have been redeemed, as was Israel in Egypt through the Passover Lamb, and snatched by divine power from the terrible pursuing enemy; who meet, like Israel at Marah, with severe testing and trial, and in their disappointment and discouragement sometimes murmur with a bitter and faithless complaint, forgetting the great salvation and power of God. Certainly Marah stands for the sweetening of those bitternesses, the curing of the ills to which both flesh and spirit are heir. True, God has implanted healing properties in waters and drugs even to the present day for the healing of bodily ills. He has made man capable of wresting secrets from nature which have marvelously advanced the art of healing. It is true that His is the healing hand behind it all. But this incident is intended chiefly as a lesson and warning against that sin and disobedience which lie at the root of all sorrow, suffering, and sickness in the world. The tree there cast into the waters is obviously a figure of the tree on which hung the Jehovah of the New Testament-even Jesus, the only remedy for the cure of mankind's ills-and which alone can sweeten the bitterness of human experience through that forgiveness of sin and sanctifying of life which it accomplished.

Certainly God could and did heal physical maladies in the Old Testament whenever it pleased Him. Moses cried out to Jehovah in behalf of Miriam smitten with leprosy: "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee" (Num. 12:13). The Old Testament clearly reveals God's anxious desire and purpose to heal the hurt of His people, and the wounds and sorrows of all mankind. Certainly God removed plagues and pestilences. But the fact that He visited such plagues and pestilences as punishment is evidence of the underlying root of it all sin. The psalmist acknowledges this when he says "Bless the Lord, O my soul ... who [first] forgiveth all thine iniquities and [then] healeth all thy diseases" (Ps. 103:2, 3).

Other Scriptures state this even more strongly. "Why criest thou for thine affliction? Thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee" (Jer. 30:15). "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? Hath thy soul loathed Zion? Why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, and there is no

good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!

We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee” (Jer. 14:19, 20).

Then many references to sickness and wounds are simply figurative expressions of moral and spiritual ills, so that it is rather in this sense that God is known as Jehovah-rophe-Jehovah who heals. This is what Jeremiah means when he says: “For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith Jehovah” (30:17); and again: “Return, ye backsliding children and I will heal your backslidings” (3:22). So Isaiah speaks of the day in which “Jehovah bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound” (30:26). He predicts the coming of One upon whom the Spirit of Jehovah God will rest in order, among other things, to bind up the brokenhearted (61:1).

The will, and the power, and the longing are present in Jehovah to heal. The only obstacle in the way is man himself. The remedy is there-near at hand-as near as the tree at Marah’s waters. “The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart,” says Moses (Deut. 30:14). There is salvation for every sin, healing for every evil. The remedy only awaits acknowledgment or application. This, man has often been unwilling to do. A king of Judah smitten with a disease, evidently and appropriately because of a certain evil act, sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians (II Chron. 16:12). It was because of sin that the remedy lay for him in Jehovah’s hand alone, even though physicians may have been sufficient for the cure otherwise. For the hurt of his people, brought about by sin, Jeremiah asks: “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?” (Jer. 8:21, 22). The remedy was there-in Jehovah Himself-but they went on and on refusing it “till there was no remedy” (or healing) (II Chron. 36:16). And centuries later the word of the Lord Jesus to His people was, “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40).

JESUS THE HEALER IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Jehovah who heals in the Old Testament is the Jesus who heals in the New. The ministry of the Lord Jesus began with healing. In the synagogue at Nazareth, having returned in the power of the Spirit from His great temptation, He opened His public ministry by quoting Isaiah 61:1: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18). In Luke 4:23 we find Him saying to them: "Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country." The reference was to acts of healing which the Lord Jesus had performed there. In the same chapter various acts of healing are recorded-the healing of fevers, the cleansing of leprosy, the casting out of demons. So He continued all through His ministry. They brought to Him all that were diseased. And He went about "teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matt. 4:23). These miracles of healing constantly amazed the people and He cited them as proofs of His identity and mission. When John in prison doubts His identity, He sends back word: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matt. 11:4, 5). "The same works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me," He said (John 5:36).

But as with Jehovah of the Old, so with Jesus of the New Testament, physical healing was only incidental to His chief object, which was the healing of the souls of men. His opening words in the synagogue at Nazareth declared His mission to be to preach the Gospel, to preach deliverance, to set at liberty. His miracles of healing were proof of His identity and mission-His credentials. Healing men's bodies was a great and blessed work, indeed. Yet many of the sicknesses He healed were striking symptoms of that dark, dread disease which has its roots in the soul of men and not in the body-the disease of sin. How often He cast out demons! And what does demon-possession stand for but sin-possession? How often He healed the leper! And what is leprosy but a type of sin in its foulness and vileness. The Old Testament is clearest in its

teaching of this truth. How often He said to those He healed, “Sin no more!” or “Thy sins be forgiven thee!” And He silences His carping critics and accusers with the words: “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Matt. 9:12); and connecting the idea of sickness and healing with sin, He continues: “for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”(Matt. 9:13). True, He went about healing bodies and doing good, but His invitation ever was: “Come unto me and I will give you rest”-“rest [or cure] unto your souls.”

Then the Lord Jesus consummated His ministry by becoming that tree which made the bitter pools of human existence waters of life and healing and sweetness. The teaching of Marah is wonderfully fulfilled in Him. There they were taught the corruption and the bitterness of the purely natural waters which are only an aggravation of the soul’s sickness and need. Only the tree of God’s provision and choice could purify and sweeten and satisfy. To the woman at the well the Lord Jesus said: “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:13, 14). On a great feast day in the Temple at Jerusalem He cried: “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37, 38, A.S.V.). The Lord Jesus is both the tree and the waters. “Who his own self hare 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.” He is the Well of salvation (Isa. 12:3), the Water of life, sweet, saving and satisfying.

In Him the tree of life and the river of life in Eden’s garden are free and accessible once more to Adam’s sons. This is the picture presented to us in the closing scene of the Book of Revelation: “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:1, 2).

The Word of Jehovah which He spoke by His messenger, the prophet Malachi, has found glorious fulfillment and awaits a yet more glorious fulfillment. “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings” (Mal. 4:2). What Jehovah was to Israel at Marah, so the Lord Jesus is to all who will receive and obey Him, the Great Physician. How sad, that, like Israel of old who refused Jehovah till there was no remedy, multitudes today have refused the healing sacrifice and ministry of Jehovah-Jesus! And along with many who call themselves by His name, they prefer other physicians and remedies to Him-culture, science, philosophy, social improvement-forgers of lies and physicians of no value, as Job calls them (13:4). But praise God for the multitudes who have received Him, and applied His remedy, and have been made whole, and “take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17).