

## **Talk 1 – Exodus 2: 1-8**

### **Water in the Bible**

Water is powerful symbol throughout the Bible and this reflects the fact that the Bible was written by people who were very aware of just how precious water was and of the ever present threat of it running out.

They lived with a very close day-to-day connection with water. This awareness in turn made them more appreciative and respectful of water as they saw it as a gift from God - a provision for God's creation and that meant everything in creation: not just the human beings, but all of the animals and plants who also share our created world.

Water does has another biblical reputation. It can be used for destruction. Just look at the story of Noah's ark or the passing through the Red Sea, particularly from the Egyptian point of view.

### **Moses and water**

Moses in particular, had many interesting encounters with water. This story from Exodus almost sets the scene for how water would become to him, a key companion in his life.

The ancestors of Abraham Isaac and Jacob were in Egypt and they were an enslaved people. The pharaoh of Egypt had heard that a deliverer would rise up amongst the Israelites and overthrow the nation - and he was very worried. So he put out a decree that young male Israelite children should be found and killed. Therefore when Moses' family gave birth to him, they tried to hide him, but the authorities seemed to have caught up with them so they did the only thing they could possibly do to save him and that was to entrust him to the water in the hope that someone would find him and protect him.

This was the great river Nile and was being used by the Pharaoh's daughter for bathing when she noticed Moses in the basket and saved him and brought him up as her own. Therefore Moses was now safe - saved by the water. God's plan to free the Israelites had found a stronghold right in the heart of pharaoh's family and government.

Later on in the Moses story, he was banished to the desert, where there was no water and he almost died, but it was at Jethro's well in Midian where he found sustenance, family and a place where he would come to hear God's call.

After being called to be the Liberator of the Israelite people, Moses famously turned the waters of the Nile red with blood in order to convince pharaoh to "let my people go". Of course the river Nile for the Egyptian people was a vital provision so if they could not use the water from the Nile then they would suffer terribly.

But once the people were let go and they reached the Red Sea or the sea of reeds, water again came to their rescue. We probably all know the famous story of God parting the sea with a strong East wind in order to let the Israelites go through and then as I mentioned earlier, ordering it to come crashing down on the pursuing Egyptian army in order to guarantee freedom from Egypt.

A short time afterwards when the Israelites reached the desert they had no water to drink. And this caused such panic that they complained to Moses that even slavery in Egypt was better than the lack of a guaranteed supply of water.

Moses story ended in one respect where it started looking out over a river. In this case he had led the people to the river Jordan but he was not able to cross it. As Moses went up mount Nebo he saw the

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land in front of him, including the Jordan, but God told him he would not be crossing it and his story came to an end here.

So for Moses, water was part of his life and his faith - he owed his life to water on many occasions and the people of Israel had been taught the importance of God's provision of water for their very existence in many ways.

They learned some hard lessons in the process, but they surely gained such a respect for the importance of water, and how it helped found the Jewish people, that it resulted in these water stories being preserved by the biblical writers, no doubt to teach future generations. Amen

## **Talk 2 – Matthew 16: 13-20**

### **Jesus, Peter and faith**

Well there may not be any specific mention of water in the gospel reading for today, but there is mention of another of the foundations of our Christian life, and that is of faith. This passage is one of the most famous in the gospels - it is the moment where Peter declares who Jesus really is in his own words and therefore Jesus changes his strategy. It is the pivot point of the gospel story; it is the moment where Jesus understands that faith in him has taken root and therefore it is time for him to complete his earthly mission and so he sets his face upon Jerusalem and the cross.

### **Faith and water**

To help bring about this faith in him, Jesus encounters water on many key occasions. He was baptised in the river Jordan; his first miracle or sign in John's gospel involves turning water into wine; he spent much of his time around the sea of Galilee which is of course where he called those first disciples - people who knew and respected water, they relied on it for their livelihood and provision.

And there were his nature miracles which famously involved walking on water, to show that he was the master of creation itself. We have a tendency to concentrate more on Jesus' role in salvation but perhaps we neglect to think about his role in creation.

So if we were asked today by Jesus who do you say that I am I wonder how we answer him? I wonder how many would think about his role in creation and in particular the provision of water to his planet and all of his creatures, whether human, animal or plant. Our faith has many aspects to it but I wonder how much our respect for creation, and in particular water, is part of it?

We have thought a little bit today about how important water was to the people of the Bible and how important it has been to our ancestors in the faith.

So can we deepen our faith through our respect for water?

Perhaps we can pray every time we use water in the coming week: when we turn on a tap; flush the toilet; have a shower; put on the washing machine or the dishwasher; if we're fortunate enough to have accessible clean water and we don't bat an eyelid when we use it, then in our prayers ask God to help us to remember those who do not have such provision.

There are also some practical things we can do to develop appreciation for water, for example we can take shorter showers, turn off the tap when brushing our teeth only use the dishwasher or washing machine when they're full or even collect rainwater in the garden and pour that on our plants - and let's face it there has been plenty of rainwater this summer!

And we can get out and visit some of the places around us that hold bodies of water – there is no better way to appreciate something than getting out and seeing it – and when you're there, give God thanks for its provision.

And we can keep in mind how either too much water, or not enough, can be fatal for our fellow inhabitants of the earth and for God's wonderful creation.

So a short prayer to end.

Dear Lord,

you are the source of life, including water, and we praise you for the gift of water that is the foundation and sustainer of all life and reminds us that you are our creator. Teach us to use it thankfully, to

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consume it consciously, and to protect its purity, in Jesus name.  
Amen.