

March 3

Scriptures: Read Exodus 16

Key Verse: "... This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat... Let every man gather it according to each one's need". (Exodus 16:15-16)

Overview

Once again the Lord preserved the children of Israel: this time from hunger. About one month after leaving Egypt, food was scarce. Upon remembering the good food they enjoyed in Egypt, they began to complain against God. It is true that when believers complain and are discontent, they are actually complaining against God, for He has a purpose and is in control of all things. The Bible teaches that whatever our state, we are to be content, for Jesus said "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). God is kind and compassionate, and fully understands human weakness. Rather than rebuking the Israelites, He began to test and teach them to daily trust and depend on Him. To prepare them for the miracle, there was the unmistakable evidence of the Lord's presence in the cloud which probably had an unusual shining radiance to show them the importance of what was to be said.

God always gives the best to His children, not only for necessity, but for delight as well. Each morning He gave them their new staple of manna, a special food from heaven, and each evening He gave them fowl in abundance. These miraculous provisions not only gave them sustenance, but, more importantly, taught His faithfulness, goodness, and constant divine presence among them. Certain instructions were to be followed serving to test their obedience. However, when they gathered manna on the Sabbath the Lord rebuked them. He desired obedience from His children, just as He expects it from believers today. He said, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?" (16:28). This shows that the Sabbath was already known. It had been instituted by God after His work of creation (Genesis 2:2-3); however, previous to that time it had not been observed in any special way.

God gave the Sabbath to His redeemed people as a gift (16:29); a day they needed to be refreshed, both physically and spiritually, before the work week began. Believers today, as well, need to dedicate this special day to the Lord in worship and meditation on Him.

The manna (meaning, "what is it?") was not a natural phenomenon; it came supernaturally from God. In the Middle East there is a white substance that is found on a particular kind of tree. Some Bible commentators, trying to explain away the supernatural have said this is the same as the manna of the Bible. However the differences far outweigh any similarities. Like the manna of the Bible this white substance comes in the early morning, melts in the hot sun and has a sweet flavor, however it is seasonal, found only in the summer. The manna of the Bible was gathered all year round for 40 years until, just as suddenly as it had appeared, it miraculously stopped when the Israelites entered Canaan. It was found everywhere on the ground, not just on certain trees. The white substance that some Bedouins gather today can only be boiled down to make a sweet syrup; it cannot be ground or baked into bread or cakes as the Israelites had done, as well as boiling it (16:23).

Clearly, the manna was a divine and miraculous provision from God. Another miracle was that if the manna was kept overnight, except on the Sabbath, it would spoil. The only reason it did not spoil on the morning of the Sabbath was that it was sanctified by God's word. Six nights out of seven the people went to bed without any of their staple food in the house. They had to learn contentment and trust God to supply in the morning.

In the Bible, manna is a symbol of three heavenly gifts from God which are our spiritual support and comfort while we are in the wilderness of this world: (1) Jesus, the most precious gift from God, regarded manna as a shadow of Himself, the true Bread of life from heaven (John 6:31-35). Anyone coming to Him will be fully satisfied. (2) The World of God, by which our souls are nourished, is pictured in the manna (see Matthew; Deuteronomy 8:3). And (3) for those who overcome, the reward and comforts of the Spirit are "hidden manna" (Revelation 2:17).

Prayer

Our Lord, You have made daily provision for us. Thank You for the bread of Life, our Lord Jesus. Help us to partake of Him, by faith daily through prayer and reading His Word.