

Monday Week 15 **The Wilderness**

Q. 57 How did God feed the Children of Israel in the Wilderness?

A. He sent them manna from heaven.

Bible Reading: (Ex. 16:10-15)

When a robin wakes up in the morning, it needs to get some food, especially if it has baby robins in the nest. It can't go to a grocery store to buy food. It has to go find it. What if there was no food for the robin to find? It would starve and so would the little robins in the nest. But robins find food. When a robin hops around on the ground, it will stop every once in a while and cock its head to one side. It is listening. Sometimes it hears the sound of an earthworm crawling. The robin will hop toward the earthworm and grab it. Sometimes the worm is partly in a hole in the ground. The worm will try to go underground and the robin will pull on it. Usually the robin wins, and has food to take to the nest. God has made things in the world so that birds have food to eat without going to the store.

When the Children of Israel were in the wilderness, they didn't have stores where the people could buy food. God provided them food called manna. It came down from heaven every day for forty years. It was a special miracle that God did so that the people wouldn't starve to death. "[God] had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven" (Ps. 78:23, 24).

Thinking deeper

How is it that for thousands of years there has been enough food for the robins, and enough food for the worms and other things that robins eat? How is it that there are enough mice to feed the red-tailed hawks, the foxes, and the coyotes? How is it that there are enough shrimp and krill in the oceans to feed the whales? How can the right plants be there to feed the right kind of insects? How come there are milkweeds so that there can be monarch butterflies? These are only a few of the millions of questions that could be asked about the balance of nature. The truth is that this is a complex world we live in with incredible interdependency among a wide array of life forms.

Evolutionists claim that all these forms evolved, many of them separately, against impossible odds, to the point where this complex interdependent eco-system works just nicely, all glory to Darwin. These same people claim that they can have a robust morality springing from the same Darwinian fount.

On the other hand, God created the heavens and the earth, and the seas and everything living. He put everything in its place and set the balance of nature. Though interrupted and corrupted by the fall of man and the flood, God still worked out an incredibly balanced eco-system that has worked quite well for a long time. How he fed the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years is another example of His ability to supply needs. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil.4:19). All glory to God!

Tuesday Week 15 **The Wilderness**

Q. 58 In what way did God provide water for the Israelites?

A. God brought water out of the rock when Moses struck it with the rod.

Bible Reading: (Ex. 17:1-7)

How long can you live without eating? Some people have gone for forty days without food. How about water? Some people say you will die in three or four days. Others say you could live maybe as long as a week. One thing is sure. Without water you won't live very long.

The Children of Israel lived for forty years in the wilderness. Some of the places they went had no water. When they came to a place called Rephidim, there was no water. The Lord told Moses to lead the people to Horeb, another name for Mt. Sinai. He told Moses to take his rod and strike a rock. Water came out of that rock. It must have been a lot of water. Thousands and thousands of people were able to have water to drink.

God made water come out of a rock. God can do miracles that man can't explain. God brought "forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst" (Neh.9:15). God watches out for His people.

Thinking Deeper

Adam Clarke has an interesting note regarding this incident, which has been described as possibly the greatest miracle Moses was involved with. Clarke credits a Dr. Priestly with these words. "This supply of water...was a most wonderful display of the Divine power. The water must have been in great abundance to supply two millions of persons...There are sufficient traces of this wonderful miracle remaining at this day. This rock has been visited, drawn, and described by Dr. Shaw and others; and holes and channels appear in the stone, which could only have been formed by the bursting out and running of the water. No *art* of man could have done it, if any motive could be supposed for the undertaking in such a place as this." (Clarke's Commentary, Vol.1)

The controversy between unbelievers and people of faith regarding Biblical claims often rests on the possibility of God doing miracles. If there is no God, then there are no miracles. But if there is a God, the God described in the Old and New Testaments, then miracles are not only possible, but to be expected. God is all powerful and can do what needs to be done. Water out of a rock? No problem. God later turned water into wine. Feeding hungry Israelites with manna? No problem. God later fed 5,000 with a few loaves and fish. If there is a God, there is no problem with the possibilities of miracles. "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

Wednesday Week 15 **The Wilderness**

Q.59 What did God promise Israel if they would obey his voice?

A. He promised that they would be a special people if they kept His covenant.

Bible Reading: (Ex. 19:1-6)

A boy was playing at the edge of the lawn. There were trees and a jungle near the house. His father came outside and was watching his son. Suddenly the father's eyes grew large. He spoke in a quiet voice. "Son, do just as I say. Drop to the ground and begin crawling toward me. Do it now." The boy did not question the instructions. He had been trained to obey his father's voice. He dropped to the ground and crawled toward his father. After he had crawled for several yards, he heard his father say, "Now, get up and run to me." The boy ran to his father.

"Daddy, why did you make me crawl?" asked the boy. The father pointed to a tree. Just above where the boy had been playing was a branch. On the branch, looking down, was a very dangerous snake.

"Son, I'm glad you obeyed me when I spoke to you. I didn't want to shout because I didn't want to startle the snake. You did well when you followed my instructions." The boy hugged his dad. He was glad he had obeyed.

God told Israel that they would be specially cared for if they obeyed His voice. As long as they listened, God helped them. God will help us as we obey His voice.

Thinking Deeper

God is a covenant keeping God. That means He keeps His promises. When He promised special blessings to the Children of Israel, He gave them special blessings. However, later in their history Israel came to the place where they were not given such special blessings. Was it because God failed to keep His covenant? No. It was because this covenant was conditional. "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me." God made the promise, but it was based on the people obeying His voice.

It is popular to speak of God's unconditional love. And it is true that God does love the world, even "while we were yet sinners." But God's love for man does not mean that God will bless man in disobedience. Out of His love, God offers salvation to the penitent sinner. But God does not dispense His blessings without the proper heart condition in man. We cannot expect to be protected as God's special treasure if we disobey His voice. Jesus loved the Rich Young Ruler, but allowed him to go away sorrowful. God's love reached out to the young man, but that didn't mean the young man responded. Yes, Christ's unconditional love reached out to that young man, but he did not force his love upon him.

If we will receive the special blessings of God, we must be those who obey God's voice.

Thursday Week 15 **The Wilderness**

Q.60 Who did God call up to Mt. Sinai to receive the law?

A. God called Moses to receive the law.

Bible Reading: (Ex. 19:17-20)

James Moore was already exhausted. He had ridden 140 miles west to the relay station. Now someone needed to bring another sack of mail back. But the Pony Express rider who was to take the eastbound mail had been killed. It was up to James to bring the mail back. So he took the saddle, and in ten minutes started back east. When he got back to his station, he had ridden on pony express horses for 280 miles. He was one of the Pony Express heroes.

Before airplanes and postal trucks, the Pony Express took mail by horse and rider between Missouri to California. They claimed that the mail could make it in ten days or less. An advertisement looking for riders read like this: "Wanted: Young, skinny, wiry fellows, not over 18. Must be expert riders, willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred. Wages \$25 per week."

These young riders had the important job of carrying mail by horseback. Sometimes they went through dangerous territory. Some riders were attacked by Indians. Yet they managed to get the mail to its destination.

God called Moses up to Mt. Sinai. Moses was to receive the law from God. The law told people how to live. Moses was a faithful man. He brought God's message to the people. The most famous part of that message is what we call the Ten Commandments. Moses did an important job for God when he brought the commandments to the people.

Thinking Deeper

God gave the law so that His people would know what was right and wrong. Specifically, God gave the law because people are disposed to do wrong. From birth we go the wrong way. So that we would know where we've done wrong, God gave the law. "The law was added because of transgressions." Man doesn't need the law to do wrong. Man needs the law to show him just how wrong he is. In fact, people generally think they are pretty good. Proverbs says that "every man will declare his own goodness." When the law is added, though, that goodness fades. The Apostle Paul said that "when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

Moses brought the law from God to the people. It showed them their wickedness. Only when they realized their sin could they appreciate the sacrifices made for sin. The law does the same today. God in mercy sends the law so that we can realize our need for His grace. When we see the depth of our need, we will appreciate the wonderful provision in Christ to meet that need.

Friday Week 15 **The Wilderness**

Review the week's questions.

Q. 57 How did God feed the Children of Israel in the Wilderness?

A. He sent them manna from heaven.

Q.58 In what way did God provide water for the Israelites?

A. God brought water out of the rock when Moses struck it with the rod.

Q.59 What did God promise Israel if they would obey his voice?

A. He promised that they would be a special people if they kept His covenant.

Q.60 Who did God call up to Mt. Sinai to receive the law?

A. God called Moses to receive the law.

Bible Reading: Nehemiah 9:19-21

It was in the days before there were McDonald's that a family of six children were riding in their station wagon with their mom and dad. "I'm hungry," said one of the boys. One of the girls said she was hungry too. In fact, everyone in the car was hungry. They were a long way from home. The mom whispered something to the dad, who stopped at a grocery store. She went inside. In a short time she returned with a paper sack. In it was a loaf of bread, meat, and a sack of potato chips. They thanked the Lord for the food and then had baloney and potato chip sandwiches. They were glad for something to eat.

The Children of Israel had no McDonald's and no grocery stores when they were in the wilderness. God provided what they needed. God will supply our needs, too, if we trust Him.

Thinking Deeper

S. D. Herron, founder of Hobe Sound Bible College, preached a message in which he compared the manna God sent from heaven for Israel in the wilderness to the Word of God that He has graciously made available for us. Two of his major points were 1) God told the people to gather manna every day, and 2) yesterday's manna is not good for today. In making a parallel application of the truth, Brother Herron encouraged getting the "manna" of the Word of God fresh every day. The supply is there. It is enough for everyone. It is as important to read the Bible as it is to eat food. "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary *food*" (Job 23:12). It is the daily taking in of the Word that strengthens us and gives us life.

Brother Herron's second point was that if we rely on what was in the past, like manna, it could breed worms. Although Moses had told the people not to store the manna for the next day, "some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms" (Ex. 16:20). Each generation needs to find the Word fresh for them. Just because our parents found the truth is no indication that we have found it ourselves. You must find the manna fresh for yourself every day. This generation must find the manna fresh for itself. Each one of us must personally find and receive the Word of God. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jer.15:16).