

File No. 29

EXODUS 16:1 – 17:7

Psalm 105:40–42

FOOD IN THE WILDERNESS / WATER FROM THE ROCK

(SBS Bk 1 Story Nos. 42 & 43)

Story Notes

Exodus 16

For a third time in six weeks, Israel complained to Moses as though he had brought them out of Egypt and was the source of their problem. Their complaint was vicious, 'would that we had died,' they said. God continued to pursue his plan to redeem his people. He would give them quail each evening, showing them that He was their Redeemer. He would give them bread each morning as a revelation of His glory. Right then, the glory of the Lord appeared to them in the cloud. Israel was bogged down in their immediate needs and had no joy in being a people dependent on the living God. But God had revealed his care for his people, and so, revealed his glory. This was to be remembered throughout their history.

By limiting the collection of bread to one day's requirements, and to two before the Sabbath, God was testing them to see if they would follow his instructions. Faith in God had to be expressed as obedience to his commands.

Exodus 17

Again, Israel's anger was aroused by their need, this time, of water, and again, they blamed Moses. Their anger was murderous. God had said he was testing them (Exod. 16:4) but Moses could see that Israel was testing God (Exod. 17: 2). As before, God's response to Israel's complaint was to send Moses on ahead to provide yet another evidence of his grace. God was present with Israel, standing before Moses as though to serve him and Israel's need (cf. Deut. 1:38).

Israel was still no better after 40 years of wandering. They complained again about a lack of water (Num. 20:1-13). These times of unbelief were remembered in Israel's songs. When God tested his people, to know what was in their hearts (Deut. 8:2, 5), they tested the Lord (Ps. 78:17-39; 81:6-10; 95:6-11). On the second occasion of providing water from a rock, Moses lost patience with the people. God, however, was still patient.

God later identified himself as the Rock that had been with them throughout their journeys (Deut. 32:4, 15, 18). He was a Rock to stumble over (Isa. 8:14). Later again, Paul said that the Rock was Christ (I Cor. 10:1-12). Finally, it was God's own Son who was struck like a rock so that living water could flow out for his people. Through him, God has shown us that his purpose to save us is greater than our angry rebellion.

The food Israel had was spiritual, perhaps in the sense that it was a gift of Fatherly love to them. Therefore, Israel's complaining to Moses was wilful ignorance of divine love. It was also an indulging of themselves, as Paul indicates, and, therefore a warning to us to beware of living as they did.

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