

## Chapter 15

# GOD PRESERVES ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

EXODUS 13, 16-17

After God delivered his people Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground, he led them into the wilderness. From there he would lead them to the promised land of Canaan, a place where they would live with God and worship him as their God. Canaan was a picture of heaven. God promises to save his people from their sins and bring them to heavenly glory through Jesus Christ. The wilderness was a picture of this sinful world. Just as Israel walked through the wilderness, we must walk through this world on our way to heavenly glory.

Like this sinful world, the wilderness was a hard place to live in. It was a waste-howling wilderness, full of wild beasts and poisonous snakes. There was no food for the people in the wilderness. There was also no water for them to drink. It was too hot during the day and too cold at night. Besides all that, the Israelites did not know the way through the wilderness to the land of Canaan. God had to lead them. God had to care for them in the wilderness.

Shortly after they entered the wilderness, the people complained because they

were hungry. They accused Moses of taking them into the wilderness to kill them with hunger. “In Egypt we always had enough to eat,” they said. “We would rather have died in Egypt than to starve in the wilderness.” This was a very evil thing to say, but the Lord was merciful. He heard Israel’s complaints and told Moses that he would give them bread to eat.

When the people woke up the next morning, they saw little pieces of bread that covered the ground. It was special bread that contained everything the Israelites needed to stay alive in the wilderness. They would not need any other food. The bread was also delicious. It was white and tasted like bread made with honey. Israel called the bread manna. It was bread from heaven. Manna was perfect food for Israel.

The people had to gather the bread in the morning when it lay on the ground. When the sun came up and became hot, the bread melted away in the heat. Every morning they had to gather enough manna for one day. Moses told them they could boil it or bake it and eat as much as they needed for that day, but they could



not leave any manna until the next day. The only day that was different was the day before the Sabbath. On that day they gathered enough for two days because God would not give them manna on the Sabbath. Some of the people did not listen when Moses told them to gather only enough manna for one day. They gathered much more than they needed, ate some, and left the rest to sit until the next morning. When they woke up, the manna was full of worms and stank. God used manna to teach Israel to trust that he would give them bread every day.

But soon the people were complaining that they had no water to drink. They said, "Moses, give us water to drink. You are trying to kill us and our children and all our animals with thirst!" Then they said something very terrible: "Is God with us or not?" They doubted God's goodness to them. And they were so angry they were almost ready to kill Moses with stones.

Moses prayed to God. God told him to smite a special rock with the rod in his

hand. Moses hit the rock, and out gushed water like a river for the Israelites and all their animals. By a wonder of grace, this rock followed them in the wilderness and continued to provide the Israelites with water.

With bread from heaven and water from a rock, God graciously gave his people the food and the water they needed to live in the wilderness. And God never let the Israelites get lost in the wilderness. He was always with them in the great pillar of cloud by day and in the pillar of fire by night. God was shade for the hot days and he was light for the dark, cold nights.

God also cares for us in the wilderness of this world. He gives us our daily bread, the food and the drink we need to live each day. But more than that, he gives us bread from heaven, Jesus Christ, to feed our souls. He gives us water from the Rock, Jesus Christ, by giving us his Spirit. And he leads and guides us by his Spirit and Word all through this life until he brings us to heavenly glory.