

EDITOR: Jim Wood, 15 Fenay Crescent, Almondbury, Huddersfield, HD5 8XY.
Tel. 01484 537981; e-mail: jawood@talk21.com

Exhortation

"Let this mind be in you . . ."

3. "Man shall not live by bread alone"

Jim Wood

GOD TOLD His people that the reason for them being led "forty years in the wilderness" was "to humble [them], and to prove [them], to know what was in [their] heart" (Deut. 8:2), and the way in which this threefold aim was achieved was by these three actions: "He humbled [them], and suffered [them] to hunger, and fed [them] with manna" (v. 3). This manna was provided for them. They did not have to sow, water, or cultivate, and they went through this experience so that, when they were brought into prosperity and plenty in the land promised to them, they would not boast of themselves.

Here was an opportunity to learn, to be trained, to develop an attitude of mind such that they would not say in their heart: "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (v. 17). Rather, they would remember the Lord their God: "it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth" (v. 18).

Psalms 78 is the Divine commentary on their failure. They learned little. They were not humbled: "they tempted God in their heart" (v. 18). They did not suffer hunger: "they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (v. 19). Though daily they were provided for, and they "did eat angels' food: He sent them meat to the full", yet "they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation" (vv. 25,22).

The psalm stresses: "they did eat, and were well filled: for He gave them their own desire; they were not estranged from their lust" (vv. 29,30). They were inward looking, seeking satisfaction of their selfish wants; provided for, yet not satisfied, hungry still. "Their heart was not right with Him" (v. 37), the mind that was in them was not "set . . . aright" (v. 8). They had failed to appreciate that it was not just the bread that kept them alive but the One Who provided that bread. He was the One Who spoke and it was done by the angels "that do His command-

ments, hearkening unto the voice of His word" (103:20).

The parallels with the experience of Jesus in the wilderness are many. He was "led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted" (Mt. 4:1). The record says he "fasted forty days and forty nights" (v. 2). Just as with the Israelites the food that they had been accustomed to in Egypt was not available to them, so with Jesus the normal diet was withheld. Was he, however, sustained by bread from heaven?

On another occasion, when the disciples were concerned that he was neglecting to eat enough, he said: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of" (Jno. 4:32). Is this how he was sustained for forty days and forty nights, and why Matthew says, "he was *afterward* an hungred" (4:2)? Then came the temptation to provide for himself what he wanted through his own "power and . . . might" (Deut. 8:17), the temptation to forget the "wonderful works that [God] hath done" (Ps. 78:4), to think that the only way he was sustained was through bread.

Jesus, however, unlike his people of old, continued to learn through "the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8). He understood and was prepared to apply what he believed; that he lived "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Mt. 4:4). His continuing to live depended not just on the consuming of bread, but on the will of his Father which was being spoken to His angels, those who are "ministers of His, that do His pleasure" (Ps. 103:21). Following this adamant refusal to give in to his "own desire", the word of God went forth: "and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him" (Mt. 4:11).

He had proved what was in his heart and mind. This is our task: to show the same mind; thankful for our daily bread, but humble; proving our dependance on His Word; mindful of His ways; attuned to His will; in short, "stedfast with God" (Ps. 78:8).