

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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## Spiritual Things: The provision of Christ

In the following series of talks we will examine a number of spiritual things that are listed in the scriptures. For example, in this broadcast we will consider spiritual things provided in Christ Himself and in the next three we will explore what is said about spiritual men, spiritual songs and a spiritual house.

So, the subject today is "Spiritual Things Provided in Christ". We shall examine the Lord Jesus Christ as:

- the spiritual food;
- the spiritual Rock; and
- the spiritual drink.

In so doing we must turn to 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 where we read: *"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness."*

The passage we have read presents a brief history of God's provision for the children of Israel as they travelled through the wilderness. In it we can discern lessons for the Christian today as he travels through the wilderness of this world. Some may question whether this is the case; but we read in 1 Corinthians 10:11: *"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."*

The Lord Jesus said in a prayer to His Father: *"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"* (John 17:14-16). He was praying about His own disciples. This, therefore, applies to us as believers today. We are in the world, but we are not of the world. We have a heritage that is not material, but spiritual. In other words, we are in an environment which is alien to us as citizens of heaven. The world is characterised by the lust of the flesh that seeks self-satisfaction; the lust of the eyes that seeks to possess; and the pride of life that seeks self-glory (see 1 John 2:16). The Christian desires the opposite. He wants to please God by walking righteously; to lovingly give rather than take; and to give glory to God in all he says and does.

The first of the three provisions of God in Christ is found pictured in the Old Testament manna that He miraculously sent to the children of Israel. The word "manna" means "what is it?" It was so named because the people of God had no idea what it was. If we apply this to Christ, we immediately see the truth of John 1:10-11: *"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not."* The verses identify Him as the Creator, the Christ and the Crucified One.

The manna was as **small** as hoar frost and suggests the humility of Christ as found in Philippians 2:5-8 *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."*

The manna was **round**. Just as a circle has no beginning and no end, so Christ is an eternal Person. This is taught in John 1:1-4: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men."*

From these verses, we see:

- He was subsisting before any beginning;
- He was a distinct Person with God;

- He was God;
- He always subsisted in this way with God;
- He is the Creator;
- He is the Source of life;
- He is the Light of men.

The manna was as **white as coriander seed** showing us two things about the Lord Jesus. First, the whiteness tells us He was pure - without sin. As the Apostle John stated: *"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin"* (1 John 3:5). Furthermore, the comparison with coriander teaches us that He would suffer physically because the root word for "coriander" relates to "furrows" or "gashings". In Isaiah 52:14 we find predicted: *"...His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."*

Exodus 16:31 tells us the manna tasted like **honey**. This reminds us that Christ delighted in the will of God. As Psalm 119:103 states: *"How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"* If we combine these thoughts, we can hear the echoing words of the Lord Jesus in John 4:34: *"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."*

The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is the **true manna** is found in John 6:32-33: *"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."* In John 6, Jesus describes Himself as:

- the true bread from heaven (as we have seen in John 6:32);
- the bread of God that was sent by the Father to give life to the world - the Saviour (John 6:35);
- the bread of life - the Source of life itself (John 6:35); and
- the living bread - the eternal One (John 6:54).

God had several purposes for choosing to feed His people manna. These are listed in Deuteronomy 8:16 where we read of the Lord who: *"Fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might **humble** thee, and that he might **prove** thee, to **do thee good** at thy latter end..."* In like manner He has given us the Lord Jesus so that we, feeding upon Him by faith, may grow to be like Him in all our ways. We are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (see 2 Peter 3:18).

Especially, we are to have the humility of Christ that was listed previously from Philippians 2:6-8. In order to have this humble mind of Christ means we must live a life of obedience to God - a life of self-sacrifice and dependence. Do you remember His words in Matthew 11:28-30: *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light?"*

The proof of our faith is found in the measure of our love for Christ. Is He really our chief love? Is He truly our Lord? It is often said that love for God may be measured by obedience to Him. Do we keep the commandments of our Lord as found in the epistles in particular? Do we keep His word and His sayings as found in the Gospels? How important it is to read the New Testament and obey the truths found in it

As we feed on Christ and become more like Him, we will find ourselves living in the will of God. This adds power to our prayer for He will then not only hear but also answer positively (John 14:13). He is also pleased to bless us because He is the Father of lights from whom every good and every perfect gift comes (James 1:17).

We now turn to consider Christ as the Spiritual Rock. We remind ourselves of 1 Corinthians 10:4: *"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."* The Apostle had the event in Exodus 17 in mind where Moses had been instructed to smite a rock in order to gain water for the thirsty people of Israel. There we read the word of the LORD: *"Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?"* (Exodus 17:6-7)

The fickle faith of the children of Israel is a warning for us today. God had done so much for them, yet, when trials struck, they were quick to blame Moses their chosen leader and, therefore, indirectly blamed God. How easy it is for us to blame our spiritual leaders when things go wrong. If such blame is unjustified, as it was in this case, then we are opposing the will of God and this leads to strife in our churches. "Strife" is the meaning of the word "Meribah".

Despite the unbelief of the people, the Lord (in His grace) provided water for them in a remarkable way. Moses had been instructed to take the rod with which he had struck the Red Sea and to strike the rock upon which the LORD stood. He did so and water poured forth from it (Exodus 17:6-7). This water gave life to the thirsty people. In Psalm 78 we read: *"He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness"* (Psalm 78:15-17). Here the word "rocks" is plural. It is speaking of individual rocks rather than the substance called rock used in other scriptures. So there was more than one occasion when the Lord, through Moses brought water from rocks. For example, in Numbers 20:8 Moses was told to **speak** to a rock in order to get water. Being frustrated with the people, Moses struck the rock. Water again sprung forth; but Moses was denied entry into the Promised Land because he had disobeyed God (Numbers 20:12). The resulting streams flowed out to form rivers in the wilderness. In this sense the rock followed the children of Israel. In other words, God's original provision from the rock continued to meet the needs of the people during their forty years in the wilderness.

In 1 Corinthians 10:4, Paul indicates that the miracle had great symbolic significance as well. *"That Rock was Christ."* The Greek word used here for "rock" is *"petra"*. It is the same word used by Christ in Matthew 16:13-20. There we find Simon Peter answering the Lord's question *"...Whom say ye that I am?"* Simon Peter said, *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matthew 16:15-16). Jesus told him that this had been revealed to him by the Father. He then added, *"...Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). The rock was the statement of Simon Peter, namely, *"Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God"* (Matthew 16:16). Hence, this statement of faith is foundational to the church as shown by 1 Corinthians 3:11: *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."*

So let's take a look at the Lord Jesus as the Rock. If we turn to 2 Samuel 22:47 we read: *"The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation."* This is quite an amazing verse because the rock of Samuel mentioned there is clearly distinct from God and is described as the rock of Samuel's salvation. It is an indication of the humanity of Christ who could say to Mary Magdalene: *"Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God"* (John 20:17). As the dependent Man the Lord Jesus could speak of *"my God"*. Yet, He is the Rock of Salvation. This is confirmed by Acts 4:11-12: *"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."* The fact that He is the Rock shows that He is strong, steadfast and dependable.

Salvation is threefold for the Christian - past, present and future. In this sense the Lord is the Rock who follows us through the wilderness of this world. We find that we are saved from the penalty of sin - the judgment of God (Romans 1:16-18; Romans 5:9). This is the salvation we receive upon initial repentance and faith. The Christian's present salvation is active for us because Christ in heaven guards and cares for us in His roles as Priest and Advocate. We are being *"saved by His life"* (Romans 5:10); and inasmuch as He ever lives, we shall be saved to the uttermost (see Hebrews 7:25). This leads us to the salvation that is future and relates to the Lord's personal coming for us. It is then that the bodies of living believers will be changed and go to be with Him. Those who have died in Christ will be raised in new bodies and these will reunited with their souls. Hence, we shall be saved completely.

In Psalm 40:2, we read of the believer being saved and set upon a rock: *"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."* If we link this verse with the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 7:24-25 we can see how we may be established in the faith: *"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."* When the storms of life strike the Christian, he is able to stand and withstand (see Ephesians 6:13) because he has the word of Christ to lead, guide and encourage in every situation.

The other aspect of Christ as the spiritual Rock is the Spiritual drink that flowed from it. We are immediately reminded that the LORD is the fountain of living waters. We read in Jeremiah 17:13: *"O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters."* Those who forsake the LORD shall be greatly disappointed and listed in the dust of the earth in preparation for judgment. But the emphasis is that the LORD is the Source of the water of life. When speaking to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, Jesus said: *"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life"* (John 4:14). The Lord Jesus was claiming to be Yahweh, the LORD of the Old Testament. He was claiming to be the fountain of spiritual water. Anyone who drinks of this water has a well of water within him. If we quickly turn to John 7 we find that this is confirmed: *"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."* (John 7:37-38). If the fountain is Christ, then what is the water? We read in John 7:39, *"(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should*

*receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)*" (John 7:39). So the water is the Spirit and the life given by Him is eternal life. Hence, we can see that the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian and, using the believer as a channel, the Spirit flows out like rivers to bring everlasting life to others.

It is worth noting that the Holy Spirit indwells the believer upon faith in Christ. Ephesians 1:13-14 states: *"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."* He indwells each believer permanently even to the day when each is glorified with Christ. As the Seal, the Spirit is evidence that we belong to God and are kept safe by God. As the Earnest, the Spirit is the guarantee of all the blessing yet to come. In the meanwhile, the Holy Spirit is employed in forming all the characteristics of Christ within us.

So, in conclusion, we have Christ to feed us; Christ to establish us; and Christ to provide us with life eternal through His Spirit. He is indeed an all-the-way-home Saviour. May our hearts be moved to worship and to serve Him as we ought.

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