

Reading: Articles: Grace Before Law (Dr. Roels)

LESSON THREE

GRACE BEFORE LAW

Introduction

The first two Lessons emphasized that no one can be saved from the punishment and guilt of sin except by God's grace. There is nothing we can do to atone for our sins and nothing we can do to earn our salvation or merit God's favor. Every spiritual gift we receive is because of God's grace.

But if this is true, why did God give His people hundreds of different laws in the Old Testament? And why does the Old Testament put so much emphasis on the keeping of these laws, the blessing of obeying the laws, and the punishment which follows from disobeying them? If no one can be saved by keeping these laws, why did God give them to us? And if no one is able to keep those laws perfectly, why did He promise that those who kept them would be blessed while those who broke them would be punished?

Those are good questions that require a clear Biblical answer. Lessons Three and Four will focus on answering them. In this Lesson, most of the emphasis will be placed on events between the time of Abraham and the giving of the Law 430 years later.

GRACE FOR THE ISRAELITES IN CAPTIVITY

After the deaths of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the people of Israel lived for four hundred years as slaves in the land of Egypt. They had left the land of Canaan during a time of great famine and had gone to find food in the land of Egypt where Jacob's son Joseph had become one of the highest rulers in the land. Though Joseph suffered much because of the antagonism of his brothers and the deception and thoughtlessness of some people in Egypt, God **graciously** used all those negative circumstances to keep the people of Israel alive during the time of famine (Genesis 50:20).

After Joseph died, the new rulers in Egypt forgot what Joseph had done and began to mistreat the people of Israel and make slaves of them. Eventually they would return to the land of Canaan, but not until they had spent four hundred years there, as God had told Abraham many years before (Genesis 15:13).

During their time in Egypt, the people of Israel suffered much but grew rapidly. They had actually become a "nation within a nation" and the Egyptian rulers felt threatened by them (Exodus 1:6-10). As a result, the rulers made life very difficult for their captives and treated them as slaves without rights and without power. But that situation was soon to change. "The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and remembered his covenant with Abraham, with

Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them” (Exodus 2:23-25).

God determined that the Israelites would not only leave Egypt as free people but that they would also leave with great possessions as He promised Abraham four hundred years before. (“I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions” (Genesis 15:14). The Israelites were totally unable to free themselves from their bondage and they certainly could not, on their own, gain “great possessions” while living as slaves. But God in His **grace** not only delivered them but provided them with riches which they never expected to have.

When the Egyptian rulers refused to let God's people leave their land as free people, God sent ten devastating plagues on the country. During the first three plagues, the Israelites seemed to suffer along with the Egyptians, but from the fourth plague onwards, God **graciously** spared the Israelites from the awesome punishment he inflicted on their idolatrous and heartless oppressors (Exodus 8:20-24).

By the time God sent the final plague, the Israelites knew that their God had not forgotten them or His promises to Abraham. GOD would set them free--free from bondage and free to serve and love and honor Him as they finally moved to the Land of Promise. And all of this would be done by His **grace** and power. They could do nothing to redeem themselves or escape from slavery. If they were to be made free, it would have to come about because of what GOD would do!

GOD'S GRACE IN THE PASSOVER

Before the Israelites left Egypt, God demonstrated in a powerful and unforgettable way that their freedom would come at great cost--but not at their own cost! When God determined to slay all the firstborn of the Egyptians (both men and animals), He made it clear to the Israelites that their own deliverance would come about only through the shedding of the blood of a substitute.

God told each Israelite family to select a perfect lamb as a sacrifice and put the blood of the sacrificed lamb on the sides and tops of the door frames of the houses where they would eat the lamb (Exodus 12:1-7). And then He said, "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn--both men and animals--and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt” (Exodus 12:12-13). It was clearly God's **grace** that would save them, though the people had to believe what God said and obey what He commanded.

Throughout the Old Testament period, the Israelites were commanded to celebrate the Passover every year (Deuteronomy 16:1-3). This annual celebration continued until Jesus became the Passover Lamb to which all previous Passover celebrations had pointed (1 Corinthians 5:7). The importance of the death of the "substitute was also re-emphasized in the

book of Hebrews where we read that "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22).

GRACE AT THE RED SEA

When the Israelites hastily left Egypt, having been covered and protected by the blood of the Passover Lamb, they left loaded with gifts from their former slave masters. The Lord graciously inclined the hearts of the Egyptians to send the Israelites out of their country in haste, showering them with costly treasures of various kinds. This dramatic and sudden change from bondage and poverty to freedom and wealth was amazing. Only divine **grace** and power could have accomplished what the Israelites experienced on their historic night of freedom. (See Exodus 12:36, "**The Lord** had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians.")

As the people journeyed in the strange and barren wilderness, God led the people in a unique but very comforting way. "By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people" (Exodus 13:21-22.) Living and traveling in the wilderness was a totally new experience for the Israelites after living for so many years in the cities of Egypt. But God **graciously** gave them a miraculous sign that He was with them every step of the way. As long as they put their trust in Him and followed where He led them, they had nothing to fear.

However, the Israelites soon realized that their travel to the Promised Land would not be free from challenge or difficulty. Within a few days after they escaped from Egypt, Pharaoh regretted that he had let the people of Israel go and went out in force to overtake them. When he and his soldiers got close to the slow-moving Israelites, they began to panic and doubt and complain. With the Red Sea in front of them and Pharaoh's troops behind them, their faith faltered and their joy dissolved. Desperately, they called out to their leader Moses, fearing greatly and complaining bitterly. (Exodus 14:10-12).

God could have punished the Israelites for their unbelief and fear, but He didn't. Through His servant Moses God told them to believe in His promises and to go forward toward the Sea. He said, "I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army . . . The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen" (Exodus 14:17-18). And then, by a miracle of grace and power, God caused the waters of the Sea to divide in such a way that His people were able to march through the sea on dry ground until they reached the other side. When the Egyptians boldly tried to pursue them, God caused the waters to roll back and destroy Pharaoh and all his trained and powerful soldiers (Exodus 14:13-31).

What a tremendous miracle this was! Once again God gave His people a powerful demonstration of the fact that HE was the source of their strength, their security, and their salvation. The people had done nothing to earn or deserve this victory and they could never have won it in their own strength or by their own power. It was God's **grace** that saved them!

The people simply had to believe what God said and obey what He commanded! Israel's future would not depend on what they could do by themselves. GOD had to rescue, preserve, and provide for them or they would be defeated over and over again.

GRACE IN THE WILDERNESS

After their humble but sincere gratitude for God's victory at the Red Sea (Exodus 15:1-21), the Israelites again exhibited a lack of faith and a spirit of rebellion and fear. Though God had provided one mighty miracle after another during their last days in Egypt and their early days in the desert, they openly longed for the difficult but predictable days of life in Egypt (Exodus 16:2-3).

Shortly after crossing the Red Sea on dry ground, the people began to suffer from thirst. Only a short time before they were desperately afraid of the threatening waters of the Red Sea. Now they were filled with anxiety and fear because they had no water to drink (Exodus 15:22-24). Their concern was understandable, but their complaining and grumbling demonstrated a complete lack of faith in the Lord who had already provided for them in so many wonderful ways. In spite of their complaining and lack of faith, however, God graciously responded to their concern by miraculously turning undrinkable water into water they could safely drink (Exodus 15:25).

Immediately after demonstrating his grace once again to His unworthy people, God gave them another tremendous promise. He said, "If you carefully listen to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His eyes, if you pay attention to His commands and keep all His decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you" (Exodus 15:26). And after giving them this wonderful promise, God led the people to a place called Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees (Exodus 15: 27).

Did the Israelites somehow "earn" all these blessings which God continued to give them? Not at all. By trusting and obeying what God commanded, they would continue to **receive** God's gifts of grace, but in no way did they **earn** them or merit them.

Shortly after God gave them His wonderful promise concerning their future health and well-being, the people again grumbled because they did not have enough food (Exodus 16:2-3). This happened on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of bondage in Egypt (Exodus 16:1)! They had been living in freedom for less than fifty days, witnessing God's grace in one miracle after another, but they still continued to live in rebellion, doubt, and fear. There was one brief period in which they paused to give God thanksgiving and praise (Exodus 15:1-21), but their worship soon gave way to grumbling and their gratitude gave way to complaint. Even then, however, God's **grace** continued to guide them, protect them, and provide for them. And as God's glory appeared to them in the cloud, He left no question that it was HE, the God who **graciously** brought them out of the slavery of Egypt, who was leading them every step of the way (Exodus 16:9-10).

GRACE FOR DAILY NEEDS

When the people continued to grumble and complain, God sent them a large supply of quails to meet their yearning for meat. He also provided a supply of manna for them to eat. And He provided this manna for them each day (except for Sabbath days) for the next forty years (Exodus 16: 11-35)! Later God provided the people with an abundant supply of water when Moses struck a rock at God's command (Exodus 17:1-7). Even then, however, the people tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Exodus 17:7) The people almost seemed deliberately intent on forfeiting the blessings God had promised them!

Both the manna and the water which God miraculously provided pointed forward to the coming of Jesus who would be born many centuries later. Over and over again, events which took place in Old Testament times pointed forward to God's "spiritual provision" for His people through the life and ministry of Jesus. In John 6:32, for example, Jesus referred to Himself as "the true bread from heaven." In John 6:33 he called Himself "the bread of God" who "gives life to the world." In John 6:35 and 48 He said He was "the bread of life." And in John 6:51 He said that He was "the living bread that came down from heaven. . . . If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever."

On another occasion, while talking with a non-Israelite at the well of Jacob, Jesus discussed the importance of drinking "living water" (John 4:4-10). He said, "Everyone who drinks this water [from Jacob's well] will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:13-14). Just as God provided for the physical needs of the Israelites in the wilderness, so He later provided for the spiritual needs of all who would trust and believe in Jesus. And, just as the Israelites did not "earn" the manna which they ate for 40 years or the water which God miraculously provided for them, so no one could earn or merit the "living water" or the Bread of Life which came from heaven. "Living water" and the "Bread of Life" were always gifts of **grace**. And they always will be!

GRACE IN BATTLE

As the Israelites continued their journey in the wilderness, a group of people called Amalekites came out and attacked them. Up to this point the people of Israel had never been involved in fighting a war. They had lived as slaves and had been involved in building store cities for the Egyptians, but they were totally inexperienced in warfare. They may have had some weapons (such as swords) which they could use in the battle, but their enemies were almost certainly much better equipped for fighting than they were. Once again they had to depend completely on their God to win a victory for them.

The most significant weapon the Israelites had for this battle was prayer. So Moses appointed one man (Joshua) to lead the Israelites in battle while he and two others went to the top of a hill to pray. "As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning" (Exodus 17:11). When Moses' hands grew tired, his two companions continued to hold up his hands in prayer until the battle was won (Exodus 17:12). The lesson was unmistakable. Unless the Lord protected them and defended them, they would not be able to win any of the battles that would face them in the future. The

Bible says that "Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword" (Exodus 17:13), but it was very clear that God gave him the victory in answer to the prayers of Moses.

GRACE THROUGH THE GIFTS OF OTHERS

God, in His grace, selected the descendants of Abraham to be his "Chosen People." He promised to bless them, care for them, protect them, guide them, and direct them in all their ways so that they could some day be a blessing to all the nations of the world.

But God didn't always bless His people directly without the help of others! Already early in their history God used Jethro, Moses' father-in-law and a ***non-Israelite***, to be a blessing to Moses and the people of Israel. Jethro had been a priest in the land of Midian (Exodus 2:16, 21), presumably serving other gods, when Moses married his daughter. However, when Jethro heard from Moses about all the things that God had done for the people of Israel, he exclaimed: "Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods Then Jethro brought a burnt offering and offered other sacrifices to God" (Exodus 18: 10-12).

Jethro then gave Moses some very important advice on how he (Moses) could best serve the people of Israel as their spokesman and their judge (Exodus 18:17-23). His advice was excellent and Moses immediately followed it (Exodus 18:24-27). God could obviously have given this advice directly to Moses Himself, but He chose to use someone else--someone from outside the nation of Israel--to accomplish His purposes.

God's **grace** often takes many forms and comes into our lives in many different ways--even in ways that might seem unusual or very surprising to us. Moses had been appointed and called directly by God to lead His people while his father-in-law had only recently come to faith in God. However, because Moses humbly recognized and followed Jethro's advice as coming from God, both he and the people of Israel were richly blessed . . . and God was honored and glorified.

GRACE AT MOUNT SINAI

When the Israelites encamped at Mount Sinai in the wilderness, God gave Moses a message to pass on to the people. It was a tremendous promise, one built on the covenant promise given earlier to Abraham, and one that would set the nation of Israel apart from all other people in the world. God said: "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6).

All that follows in the book of Exodus from this point is related to the Covenant of Grace God had made with Abraham and this covenantal promise made to the nation of Israel.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Both before and after God led His people out of slavery in the land of Egypt, He demonstrated His grace and power to them in many wonderful ways. He delivered them, enriched them, protected them, fed them, and gave them victory over their enemies. Though they were often stubborn, disobedient, and unfaithful, God remained faithful to the promises He had given long before to Abraham. He would soon be giving them laws and commands to guide them in the days and years ahead, but **BEFORE** He gave the people His laws, He reminded them of the wonderful blessings He had already given to them by His **grace**. In the midst of trials, difficulties, and fears, He had carried them "on eagles' wings" and had brought them to Himself. They had not sought Him or honored Him or done anything that would cause Him to choose them over other people or other nations. In fact, their continued failures and complaints and lack of faith demonstrated how totally unworthy they were of receiving any favor or blessing from God. However, God made it clear that He had chosen them over all other nations to be His treasured possession. And, at the same time, He made it equally clear that He had not chosen them because of anything they had done but solely by His **grace**.

In the next Lesson we will study the circumstances surrounding the giving of the Ten Commandments and other laws as we respond to the question: If God saved the people purely by grace, why did He give them so many laws?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON THREE

1. How long did the people of Israel live as slaves in the land of Egypt?
2. Joseph's brothers treated him very unkindly for many years.
 - A. Was Joseph willing to forgive his brothers for all they had done?
 - B. What did Joseph say about the treatment he had received from them? See Genesis 50:20.
3. God promised Abraham that He would give him and his descendants the land of Canaan as an inheritance. If Abraham suddenly appeared again on earth three hundred years later, would he have been surprised that his descendants were living as slaves in Egypt rather than as free people in Canaan? Give the reason for your answer.
4.
 - A. Why did the Egyptian rulers treat the people of Israel so harshly?
 - B. How did God respond to the groaning of His people in Egypt? (Exodus 2:23-25)
5.
 - A. When God sent the ten plagues on the land of Egypt, were the people of Israel affected by them too?
 - B. What reason did the Lord give for doing what He did for the Israelites? (Exodus 8:22-23)

6.

- A. What was the tenth plague that God sent on the Egyptians?
- B. How did the people of Israel "escape" this terrible plague? (Exodus 12:1-7)
- C. Fill in the blanks in the following passage from Exodus 12:13. "The _____ will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the _____, I will _____."

7.

- A. How often did the Israelites have to celebrate the Passover feast? (Deuteronomy 16:1-3)
- B. What does 1 Corinthians 5:7 tell us about Jesus Christ?
- C. What does Hebrews 9:22 teach us?

8.

- A. Did the Israelites leave Egypt in poverty or with great riches?
- B. What was the reason why the Israelites left as they did? (Exodus 12:36)

9.

- A. How did God lead the people as they traveled through the wilderness? (Exodus 13:21-22).
- B. Do you think these miraculous signs were comforting or frightening? Please explain your answer.

10.

- A. How did the Israelites react when Pharaoh and his army chased after them?
- B. What promise did God give them at this time? (Exodus 14:17-18)
- C. How did God give them a victory over Pharaoh and his army?

11.

- A. What did the Israelites do to deserve or earn this victory?
- B. How did they respond to this great victory (Exodus 14:31)?
- C. Did their response of trust and gratitude last for a long time or only a short time before they again grumbled and complained?

12.

A. When the people had no water to drink, what did they do? (Exodus 15:22-24)

B. How did God respond?? (Exodus 5:25)

13.

A. According to Exodus 16:2-3, what did the murmuring Israelites want to do?

B. Why do you think they wanted to do this?

14.

A. What great promise did God give the Israelites in Exodus 15:26??

B. What had the people done to earn or deserve this exceptional promise?

C. Why did God give them this promise?

15.

A. When the people complained that they did not have enough food or water, how did God provide for them?

B. How did the people respond to God's miraculous provision? (Exodus 17:7)

C. What does their response teach us about the "worthiness" of the people to receive God's blessing?

16. How did the manna which God provided point to Jesus Christ in the New Testament?

17. How did the water which God provided point to Jesus? 18.

A. The people of Israel would fight many battles before they would conquer the land of Canaan. (See the book of Joshua.) With whom did they fight their first battle in the wilderness?

B. How many of the Israelite men were trained and experienced fighters?

C. How did they win a victory in this battle?

D. How would this encourage them in the future?

19.

A. Who was Jethro?

B. How did God use Jethro to be a blessing to Moses and the Israelites?

20.

A. What great promise did God give to His people in Exodus 19:5-6?

B. What does this promise teach us about God's grace?

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1.

A. God blessed the Israelites in many wonderful and even miraculous ways during their time in the wilderness. Why do you think they continued to be so rebellious, ungrateful, and without faith most of the time?

B. Are Christians today much better in this regard than the Israelites?
Please give specific examples which support or explain your answer.

2. God used Jethro, someone who likely served false gods much of his life, to give some very good advice to Moses. Do you think God still uses "new" believers or even "non-believers" to bless, guide, and help His people today? Please give specific examples which support or explain your answer.

3. After God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, they may have thought that the way ahead would be smooth, pleasant, and without challenges. As a result, they sometimes longed for their old life in Egypt, even though that life was far from pleasant or easy. Do you think some Christians today expect that their new life in Christ will be smooth, pleasant, and with few challenges? And, if so, do some of them sometimes long to go back to their "old ways"?

A. Please give specific examples which support or explain your answer.

B. How would you try to "help" or encourage people who do have problems and challenges which they did not anticipate when they became Christians?

4. When the Israelites were in the wilderness God miraculously led them by a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day. In this way they were continually reminded of the presence of God with them. In spite of that, however, and in spite of the many miracles God performed for them, they still wondered whether their God was truly with them (Exodus 17:7).

A. Is it possible for Christians today to doubt that God is truly with them?

B. How does God demonstrate His presence with believers today?

C. How would you respond today to a believer who doubts that God is always with him?

5. This Lesson seeks to demonstrate that the blessings which God gave His people were always undeserved. It was only by His grace that they enjoyed freedom from captivity, victory over their enemies, a daily supply of food and drink, forgiveness for their many failures, and some very special promises from the Lord. List five stories or situations which you found especially helpful in demonstrating that God's blessings and salvation are truly **all by Grace**.

Grace Lesson Three Answers

1. About 400 years. (Some might write 430 years, since that was how much time elapsed between the making of the Covenant of Grace with Abraham and the giving of the law to Moses.)
2.
 - A. Yes
 - B. Joseph said: "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children. And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them" (Genesis 50:19-21).
3. No. Many years before, God told Abraham that his descendants would be slaves in a country not their own for four hundred years.
4.
 - A. The Egyptians were threatened by the Israelites since they were rapidly increasing in number and had become a "nation within a nation."
 - B. "God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them" (Exodus 2:24-25)
5.
 - A. The Israelites were afflicted by the first three plagues, but not by the others.
 - B. God made a distinction between his people and the people of Egypt so that the people would know that God, the LORD was in that land.
6.
 - A. The tenth plague was that God destroyed all the firstborn of the Egyptians, both people and animals.
 - B. The Israelites had to kill a year old lamb without any defect and take some of the blood of the lamb and put it on the tops and the sides of the door frames of the houses where they would be eating the lambs. When the Lord passed through Egypt to destroy all the firstborn of the Egyptians he would "pass over" the homes which were "protected" by the blood of the lamb.
 - C. blood . . . blood . . . pass over you.
7.
 - A. Once each year.

B. Jesus Christ is "our Passover lamb" who has been sacrificed.

C. "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

8.

A. With great riches.

B. The Egyptians were so eager to have the Israelites leave their country that they gave them whatever they asked for. This was according to God's promise (Genesis 15:14) and action "The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for" (Exodus `12:36).

9.

A. "By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people."

B. This should have been a comfort for the Israelites, since the desert was likely a rather lonely place and their journey to the Promised Land was much longer than they had anticipated. On the other hand, some people might have been afraid since they knew they were being "watched" all the time--both during the day and also during the night. They could never escape the presence of their God.

10.

A. The Israelites were terribly afraid and began to cry out to the LORD. They also complained bitterly to Moses and said that it would have been better for them to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.

B. God told them that he would harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they would follow the Israelites through the sea bed on dry ground. However, He would gain glory when He destroyed Pharaoh and his army, and the Egyptians would come to know that He was the LORD.

C. God parted the waters of the Red Sea so that the Israelites could walk safely to the other side on dry ground. The angel of God who had been traveling in front of the Israelites moved behind them and so did the pillar of cloud so the Egyptians could not see the Israelites. When the Israelites safely reached the other side, the Egyptians pursued them, but God threw the Egyptian army into confusion. God then caused the waters to flow back to their normal place and the entire army of Pharaoh drowned in the sea.

11.

A. Absolutely nothing.

B. "The people feared the LORD and put their trust in Him and in Moses His servant."

C. Only a short time. They soon got back to their complaining and grumbling.

12.

A. They grumbled against Moses and said: "What are we to drink?"

B. God showed Moses a piece of wood which he threw into the water with the result that the water became sweet and drinkable.

13.

A. The people again grumbled against Moses and Aaron and longed for the time when they were in Egypt where, they said, "we ate all the food we wanted." They said they wish they had died "by the Lord's hand in Egypt" because now you [Moses] "have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

B. They (understandably) were tired of being hungry, thirsty, and afraid. They remembered the "good old days" when there was food and water and relative security and they knew what each day would bring. They had little faith that God was able or willing to supply all their needs in the wilderness.

14.

A. God said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His eyes, if you pay attention to His commands and keep all His decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD who heals you."

B. Absolutely nothing.

C. Because, in His grace he still loved them as His chosen people and because of His gracious promise to guide and protect them and lead them to the Promised Land.

15.

A. God provided them with a special food called "manna" six mornings a week with enough manna on the sixth day for that day and the Sabbath Day. He also sent them quails for meat and an abundant supply of water to drink when Moses struck a rock at God's command and enough water gushed out of the rock to supply the needs of all the people.

B. The people may have been thankful but we read only that "the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord saying, 'Is the LORD among us or not?'" They may have said this before they received the food and water, but nowhere in this section do we read that the people were thankful to the Lord for all that He had done for them. In spite of all the miracles God performed in their behalf, we read much more about their complaining than their gratitude.

C. The people obviously did nothing whatsoever to earn or merit God's favor or

blessing. Everything they received was solely because of the love and grace of their God.

16. In the New Testament Jesus is called "the bread from heaven" and "the bread of life." Just as the physical and material needs of the Israelites were met through God's provision of manna, so our spiritual needs are met by Jesus, the Bread of Life. Jesus said, "He who comes to me will never go hungry" (John 6:35).

17. Jesus is the "living water." He said, "He who believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35). He also said, "Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I Give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14.)

18.

A. The Amalekites

B. Very few, if any.

C. Through prayer. As long as Moses held up his arms in prayer to God, God fought for the Israelites and enabled them to defeat their enemies.

D. The Israelites would know that whenever they trusted and obeyed God, they would be able to defeat any enemy--no matter how strong the enemy was and how inexperienced or poorly equipped they themselves were. Victory would not depend on the size or strength of their army but on the LORD!

19.

A. Jethro (also called Reuel) was Moses' father-in-law.

B. Jethro gave Moses some excellent advice as to how he could better serve the people of Israel as their spokesman and their judge.

20.

A. God said, "If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

B. Up to this point, the Israelites had repeatedly shown themselves to be a people more inclined to grumbling and complaining than to faith and obedience. Still, God graciously chose them to be His special people because of His earlier promise of grace to Abraham. The Israelites had not earned or merited anything but God still promised them a tremendous blessing if they were faithful in trusting and obeying Him. They could forfeit the blessings of the Lord through their disobedience and lack of faith, but God promised them that they alone, among all the nations of the world, would be His treasured possession.