

Freedom is Dependence (Exodus 16:1-26)

Video 2

God kept his promises. He provided for his people daily. Manna fell for forty years. It only stopped when the people had entered their new land.

And this forty-year provision became famous. In fact, God commanded that a portion of manna be kept in a jar for future generations. It would remind his people how he sustained them in the desert. For centuries, this jar was kept in the Jewish place of worship.

This helps us appreciate one of Jesus' most remarkable claims.

More than a thousand years after God's provision of manna, Jesus is in the wilderness. Having fed a crowd with a boy's packed lunch, he says:

I am the bread of life... I am the living bread that came down from heaven.

Jesus is saying this to the crowd. You are just as needy as your starving ancestors. By yourselves, you too face hopelessness and death. But I am God's provision for you.

What's even more remarkable is how Jesus will be this means of provision. Feel the shock of what Jesus says next:

This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

To make bread, wheat must be crushed. Wheat must die if it is to bring life to people who eat bread.

And that is the picture Jesus is drawing. Jesus is saying that his death brings us life.

By ourselves, we cannot be right with God. Every day we do things that rightly warrant His judgement on our lives. But Jesus' death in our place means that, every day, there's provision we can count on. Jesus has met our need. We're free from the hopelessness and fear of life without God.

Jesus isn't promising us that life will always be easy. For the people of Israel, in some ways it would have been easier to have stayed in Egypt. There, they had food and shelter. Following Jesus can make things harder. Sometimes, like the Israelites, we'll be tempted to look back at those who stayed in Egypt. We'll envy them in their comfort.

Exodus tells us that there were good days and bad days for the people as they travelled in the desert. But there was never a day they went hungry. There was always bread from heaven. Every day, God was sustaining them on their journey.

He did not let them go.

He got them to the Promised Land. And that is the promise that Jesus makes to us, as we daily depend on him.

Perhaps you feel like you're in a desert. You've fallen short or let yourself down. Perhaps your circumstances are tough. It's not always easy to see where provision will come from. Yesterday's provision can't sustain us today.

Yet Jesus' promise – "I am enough for you" – tells us we're never alone. He will give us what we need. We can be free from the hopelessness and fear of trying to provide for ourselves. We can keep putting one foot in front of the other, plodding on towards the Promised Land.

We can begin to know the freedom that comes from relying on him.