

Psalm 78 Continued

Psalms 78:20 "Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?"

Jesus is the Rock, He is the Water that flowed from the Rock, and He is the Bread.

What a foolish question to ask.

The God, that created this world and all that is in it, can easily furnish meat.

This is really blasphemy, to say that God was incapable to do this small thing.

It is a denial of Who He is.

This they allow was done by him, for these are their words continued; suggesting, that though the waters did gush out upon smiting the rock, yet they might have been in the caverns of it before, and had remained there a long time, and might have come out of themselves.

And therefore this was no such great matter, and might easily be accounted for.

But can he give bread also?

Solid, substantial bread, and was not like this light bread, the manna, as they called it (see Numbers 21:5).

Can he give us bread of corn, in a wilderness which is not a place of seed, where no corn grows?

Can he do this? this would show his power indeed.

Can he provide flesh for his people?

For so great a multitude, and in a place where no cattle are?

Let him do this, and we will believe his power.

Or else the words intimate that the smiting of the rock, and the waters flowing in such large streams, were an instance of his power, and therefore he that could do the one could do the other.

He that could bring such large quantities of water out of a rock could give them solid bread and suitable flesh, and fulness of both.

And should he not do so, they must conclude that he bore no good will to them and had no love and kindness for them.

Psalm 78:21 "Therefore the LORD heard [this], and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel;"

What they said in their hearts, and what they expressed with their mouths, all their murmurings against him, their distrust of his power and providence, and disbelief of his promises (see Numbers 11:1).

"And was wroth":

Exceeding wroth!

He was highly displeased; there was an overflow of his indignation, as the word signifies.

It was running upon him, upon the thick bosses of his buckler, to arraign his perfections, call in question any of his attributes, and disbelieve his word.

This must greatly exasperate him, and provoke the eyes of his glory.

"So a fire was kindled against Jacob":

The posterity of Jacob.

Or in Jacob, in the camp of Israel.

Which was literally true, because of the murmurings of the people against the LORD, fire came down from heaven, and burnt among them, and consumed the uttermost parts of the camp.

Wherefore the name of the place was called Taberah, which signifies a burning (Num. 11:1).

Or it may be taken figuratively for the wrath of God, which is oftentimes compared to fire (see Nahum 1:6), hence it follows.

"And anger also came up against Israel":

The people of Israel, the same with Jacob before.

The allusion is to men when angry, in whose breasts anger burns, and from thence it rises up, and shows itself in their countenance, in their eyes, and by the words of their mouth.

Psalm 78:22 "Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation:"

They trusted neither in God's power nor in his love; they neither believed that he would nor that he could save them.

This fire that came up was the wrath of God, or the fury of God, coming up in His face.

They did not believe who He was, or that He was their deliverer.

Psalms 95:10 "Forty years long was I grieved with [this] generation, and said, It [is] a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:"

I see this same problem today.

Our nation is leaning toward not believing in God.

There are those who have actually denied Jesus as Savior.

There is only one way to get to heaven, and that is through belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Psalm 78:23 "Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven,"

Which were round about him, his chariots, and the dust of his feet.

And which were at his command to go here and there, and carry and let down provisions for his people, as they did.

"And opened the doors of heaven":

As a large granary, from whence the manna, afterwards called the corn of heaven, was given out in great abundance, which is signified by opening the doors (see Malachi 3:10).

Psalm 78:24 "And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven."

So called, either from "manah", which signifies to prepare, appoint, and distribute, because this was food prepared of God for the Israelites without them, and was their provision, their appointed portion.

And which was daily distributed to them in measure.

Or from the words, "man hu", what is it? which they used at first sight of the manna, they not knowing what it was, and hence called it "man"; or "manna".

This the LORD rained down from heaven, as he promised he would, that they might have food to eat (see Exodus 16:4).

"And had given them of the corn of heaven":

Bread corn springs out of the earth, but this was corn from heaven, very unusual and wonderful.

This greatly aggravated the unbelief of the Israelites, and shows their great ingratitude.

That after all this they should disbelieve the LORD, and not trust in his salvation.

The manna was a type of Christ, who is called the hidden manna (1 Corinthians 10:3; see notes on John 6:32).

The door of heaven was opened for the believers in Christ on Calvary.

To the world, miracles of God and even the miracle of salvation seem like foolishness.

To those of us who believe, it is the power unto salvation.

The manna that fell from heaven was miracle Bread.

Look with me, at what Jesus said about manna.

John 6:58 "This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

Psalm 78:25 "Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full."

Such as was given by the ministry of angels, and, as the Chaldee reads it, descended from the dwelling of angels.

Or, it may be so called because of its excellence, such food as might suit angels, if they needed or could eat food.

And such as had some resemblance or relation to the very nature of angels, in regard of its heavenly original.

It's pure and refined substance, its vigor and efficacy in preserving and nourishing those who used it according to God's appointment.

"He sent them meat to the full":

Which may be understood either of the manna, of which they had great plenty, so that there was no lack for any man, and this continued with them till they came to the land of Canaan.

Or of the quails, of which in the following verses.

Bread from heaven fell on common man.

This was food fit for angels.

The manna fell every day of the week to feed the approximately 3 million people.

The only day it did not fall was on Sabbath.

The day before Sabbath 2 days of food fell.

They had all they needed to keep them going.

Psalm 78:26 "He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind."

See (Numbers 11:31).

In the history, the quarter from which the wind came is not mentioned, except as it might be indicated by the statement that the "quails were brought from the sea.;"

That is, evidently, the Red sea.

This wind would have come from the southeast.

The phrase "in the heaven" means in the air, or from above.

"And by his power":

By his direct agency.

It was a wind which he caused to blow for the purpose; a miracle.

God is the ruler of the wind, the same as He is the ruler of all of the elements.

We hear people say that Satan is the ruler of the air.

He is prince of the air.

Jesus is King.

God told the wind to blow the fowl over the camp, and the wind obeyed.

Psalm 78:27 "He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea:"

"Rained flesh":

A poetic description of the quail which dropped into Israel's camp in the wilderness (see Numbers 11:31-35).

Psalm 78:28 "And he let [it] fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations."

It was brought to their very doors; they had not to go and seek it abroad.

Psalm 78:29 "So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire;"

The word rendered "well" here is intensive.

It means that they were abundantly satisfied; that there was no lack; and that they had the most ample supply.

"For he gave them their own desire":

He gave them exactly what they asked.

He gave them flesh to eat as they had demanded.

And he gave it to them in such quantities that no one could say that he had not enough.

I imagine they wished they had never asked for the fowl to eat.

The quail rained on them 3 feet deep.

A person has to be very careful what you ask for.

God might give you what you want, rather than what you need, like He did here.

This is a very good example of asking amiss.

Psalm 78:30 "They were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat [was] yet in their mouths,"

By the goodness and liberality of God unto them, they were not brought to repentance for their sin of lusting.

Nor did they abstain from their fleshly lusts, or deny themselves of them, which the grace of God teaches to do.

Or else the sense is, what they lusted after, flesh, was not withheld from them, or they restrained from eating it.

They were indulged with it for a whole month together; to which agrees what follows.

"But while their meat was yet in their mouths":

The meat of the quails, while it was between their teeth, ere it was chewed, and before it was swallowed down.

While they were rolling this sweet morsel under their tongues, and were gorging themselves with it, destruction came upon them, as follows.

Just as Belshazzar, while he was feasting with his nobles, in the midst of his mirth and jollity, was slain by the Persians (Dan. 5:1).

Psalm 78:31 "The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen [men] of Israel."

Either by causing fire to come down from heaven, or by suffering them to be gorged by excessive eating, or by sending a plague among them (see Num. 11:33).

"And slew the fattest of them":

Literally, "slew among their fat ones."

That is, the most vigorous among them were cut down.

The people most eminent for rank, for influence, for strength, for valor.

How far this was the natural effect of indulgence in eating, and how far it was a direct miracle, cannot now be ascertained.

In either case it would equally show the divine displeasure.

"And smote down":

Margin, as in Hebrew, "made to bow."

That is, they were made to bow in death.

"The chosen men of Israel":

Margin, "Young men."

The idea is that of select men; men that would be chosen from among the others.

Men distinguished for vigor or influence.

Not the aged or the feeble particularly, not those who might be naturally expected to fall, but men of strength who might be supposed to be capable of resisting the ordinary attacks of disease.

God showed in this way that the judgment came directly from his hand.

They were still chewing these birds when the judgement of God fell upon them.

Their greed would cost them their lives.

Just like many other sins, their pleasure was short lived.

Their sin cost them their lives.

Many a drunk driver has wrecked and not lived to become sober.

Be sure your sin will find you out.

Sometimes the sin and the judgement for the sin seem as if they happen at the same time.

Verses 32-39:

The writer summarizes God's judgments and Israel's reactions to them.

Even the repentance of Israel was shallow and unsatisfactory, therefore not a cure for their sins.

The same pattern happened time and again, Israel sinned, God judged, Israel repented, God rescued, then the cycle began anew.

Psalm 78:32 "For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works."

Even this did not reclaim them, and prevent their sinning.

Heavy judgments do not always restrain men from sin.

Not unfrequently they take occasion from such judgments to sin the more.

"And believed not for his wondrous works":

They did not trust in His wondrous works; or, those works did not have the effect of producing faith (see Psalm 78:22-23).

Even this mighty show of the judgement of God did not affect some of them.

Sin has not changed in all these years.

It is still the same today.

Those caught up in sin are blinded and do not see the consequences of their sin.

Psalm 78:33 "Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble."

He suffered them to spend their days, the days of that entire generation, in vain and fruitless wanderings in the desert.

Instead of leading them at once to the Promised Land, they were kept there to wear out their life in tedious monotony, accomplishing nothing.

Wandering from place to place, until all the generation that had come out of Egypt had died.

"And their years in trouble":

Literally, "in terror."

Amidst the troubles, the alarms, the terrors of a vast and frightful desert.

Sin, and rebellion against God leads to a course of life, and a death of which these gloomy, sad, and cheerless wanderings in the desert were a striking emblem.

These people that He could not make understand, died in the wilderness and the next generation went into the Promised Land.

Psalm 78:34 "When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God."

Some of them, the spies particularly.

Or when he threatened to slay them, or was about to do it.

"Then they sought him":

That is, those who either survived the slain, or were threatened with destruction.

These sought the LORD by prayer and supplication, that he would not destroy them.

The Targum is, "they repented and sought him;" (see Num. 14:37).

"And they returned":

From their evil ways, and by repentance, at least in show and appearance.

"And inquired early after God":

But not earnestly, and with their whole hearts and spirits.

The Targum is, "they prayed before God;" which is often done, by carnal professors in trouble (see Isa. 26:16; Hosea 5:15).

It is such a shame that it takes drastic measures to frighten people into the knowledge of God.

I do not like to have to threaten people out of hell to get them saved.

I enjoy telling them of the love of God, more than of the judgement of God.

It seems they do not respond as well to the love, as they do to the judgement.

Psalm 78:35 "And they remembered that God [was] their rock, and the high God their redeemer."

Who had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies.

And had strengthened them against them, and supported and protected them, as well as supplied them with all good things, of whom they had been greatly unmindful.

But affliction was a means of refreshing their memory (see Deut. 32:15).

"And the high God their Redeemer":

Who had redeemed them out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, with a high hand and a mighty arm, and thereby showed himself to be the Most High God.

What does it take to stir some people?

Sometimes I believe that is why we have wars, famines, earthquakes, and other natural disasters, is to get people to think about how fragile life really is.

Some people never think of God, until they are in some terrible problem.

It makes you wonder if they really love God, or perhaps they are just believing long enough for Him to get them out of the mess they are in.

Psalm 78:36 "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues."

They made glorious but false professions and protestations of their sincere resolutions of future obedience, if God would spare them.

Psalm 78:37 "For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant."

All their confessions and petitions were but hypocritical and forced, and did not proceed from an upright heart truly grieved for their former offences, and firmly resolved to turn unto the LORD.

They discovered their hypocrisy by their apostasy from God as soon as their danger was past.

The heart of man is what he really is.

This verse above reminds me of those in Matthew that Jesus tells about.

Matthew 7:22-23 “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”
“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Just as these people above thought they could fool God by flattering Him with their mouth, but God knows what is in their heart.

They had no intention of keeping covenant with God.

Psalm 78:38 "But he, [being] full of compassion, forgave [their] iniquity, and destroyed [them] not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath."

Or merciful; having bowels of mercy, as a tender mother to the son of her womb.

A word from the same root as this signifies the womb.

The mercies of God are tender and abundant; there is a multitude of them.

He is rich and plenteous in mercy, and so ready to forgive; hence it follows:

"Forgave their iniquity":

Literally, atoned for, expiated, covered over their iniquity.

There is connected with the word the idea of expiation or atonement, as the ground of pardon.

"And destroyed them not":

Did not cut them off in their repeated acts of rebellion.

He bore with them, and spared them.

"Yea, many a time turned he his anger away":

Literally, He many times had to turn his anger away.

There were frequent occasions on their journey for doing this, and he did it.

"And did not stir up all his wrath":

But set bounds to it; and though he chastened them, yet he would not utterly destroy them, as they deserved.

God is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish. He forgave them over and over.

They deserved to die, but God forgave them.

It reminds us that we deserved to die also, but while we were yet in sin, God sent us a Savior, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

Psalm 78:39 "For he remembered that they [were but] flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again."

Compare (Gen. 6:3).

Flesh is weak, erring, frail "in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:17).

God therefore, who had made them "flesh," had compassion on their weakness.

"A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again":

Such is the life of man.

It may be fitly compared to the wind, which moves swiftly, and, passing on, loses its strength and subsides.

So the life of man is quickly gone, his days move swiftly on, he dies, and returns not again to his former state, to a mortal life.

And though the spirit returns to the body again, yet not till the resurrection.

And then not of itself, but by the power of God (see Job 7:7).

God had made them of the dust of the earth, and He knew that they were flesh with all the weakness of the flesh.

Man is like a vapor, here today and gone tomorrow.

The only life that amounts to anything is the everlasting life after we have vacated this old and sinful flesh.

Verses 40-55:

Let not those that receive mercy from God, be thereby made bold to sin, for the mercies they receive will hasten its punishment.

Yet let not those who are under Divine rebukes for sin, be discouraged from repentance.

The Holy One of Israel will do what is most for his own glory, and what is most for their good.

Their forgetting former favors, led them to limit God for the future.

God made his own people to go forth like sheep; and guided them in the wilderness, as a shepherd his flock, with all care and tenderness.

Thus the true Joshua, even Jesus, brings his church out of the wilderness.

But no earthly Canaan, no worldly advantages, should make us forget that the church is in the wilderness while in this world, and that there remains a far more glorious rest for all the people of God.

Psalm 78:40 "How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, [and] grieve him in the desert!"

Where they were not only at his mercy, having nothing to help themselves with, but had many singular mercies bestowed upon them.

And yet were continually committing such sins against God as provoked the eyes of his glory.

Ten times they tempted him, the LORD says (Num. 14:22).

Therefore, that dispensation is called the provocation and day of temptation; for it was a series of rebellion and sin (Psalm 95:8).

"And grieve him in the desert":

Which signifies the same as before, and is spoken after the manner of men (Gen. 6:6).

And like a tender parent grieved at the disobedience of his child, and that he is obliged to take the rod and chastise it.

The prophet Isaiah says, they "vexed" or "grieved his Holy Spirit" (Isa. 63:10).

The same word is there used as here (compare with Eph. 4:30).

If this is a question, the answer is over and over and over.

They would not repent of one sin and be forgiven of God, until another sin was right on the heels of the first.

Psalm 78:41 "Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel."

"Limited the Holy One":

The Israelites did this by doubting God's power.

God was limited in what He could do for them, because of their disobedience.

They were always comparing the things in Egypt with their situation out in the desert. They soon forgot they had been slaves in Egypt.

Psalm 78:42 "They remembered not his hand, [nor] the day when he delivered them from the enemy."

"They remembered not his hand":

The generations of Israelites which left Egypt and eventually died in the wilderness were characterized by ignoring God's previous acts of power and faithfulness.

The following verses (verses 42-55) rehearse the plagues and miracles of the Exodus from Egypt, which marvelously demonstrated God's omnipotence and covenant love.

The ten plagues that God brought on Egypt to defame the Egyptian gods, and to get the release of them had been of such fantastic nature, it is hard to believe that they could forget, but they did.

They act as if God had nothing to do with getting their release.

Psalm 78:43 "How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan:"

The plagues which he brought upon the Egyptians, for refusing to let Israel go.

"And his wonders in the field of Zoan":

Or in the country of Zoan, that is, Tanis, as the Targum renders it.

So the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions (see Psalm 78:12).

An enumeration of these signs and wonders follows.

But not of all, nor in the order in which they were.

Only seven are mentioned, with which compare the seven vials or last plagues (Rev. 6:1).

The sign that got them released was the tenth plague, when all the firstborn of Egypt died.

The signs were not just for the Israelites, but for the Egyptians, as well.

Those who saw, had to know that God was the real God.

The idols (nothings), in Egypt had no power at all against God.

In the next few verses the plagues are listed.

Psalm 78:44 "And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink."

(Exodus 7:20).

There was properly but one river in Egypt, the Nile.

But there were several branches of that river at the mouth.

And there were numerous artificial streams or canals cut from the river, to anyone of which the word river might be also given (compare notes at Isa. 11:15).

"And their floods":

Their streams; the canals and branches of the Nile, where they usually could obtain a needed supply of water.

This particular plague destroyed belief in the false god of the Nile river.

Psalm 78:45 "He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them."

This was the fourth plague (see Exodus 8:24).

The word signifies a "mixture", and the Targum renders it "a mixture of wild beasts".

So Josephus understood this plague of various sorts of beasts of different forms, and such as had never been seen before.

Aben Ezra (on Exodus 8:24), interprets it of evil beasts mixed together, as lions, wolves, bears, and leopards.

And Jarchi, on the same place, of serpents and scorpions.

The Syriac and Arabic versions here, following the Septuagint, render the word "dog flies"; so called because they were, as Pliny says, very troublesome to dogs, and so might give the Egyptians greater uneasiness, because they worshipped dogs.

God can make use of very mean and contemptible instruments, the least of insects, to plague and distress the most powerful enemies of his people.

"Which devoured them":

Corrupted their land (Exodus 8:24).

Perhaps produced a pestilence, which destroyed many of the inhabitants, or consumed the vegetables of the land.

As but a few years ago, in New England, a sort of insects came out of little holes in the ground, in the form of maggots, and turned to flies.

Which for the space of two hundred miles poisoned and destroyed all the trees in the country.

"And frogs, which destroyed them; with their stench (see Exodus 8:5).

With this plague compare (Rev. 16:13).

This was the second plague.

All sorts of animal life and insects were objects of worship in Egypt.

Psalm 78:46 "He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labor unto the locust."

The increase or the produce of their fields (Exodus 10:12-14).

The word is supposed to denote a species of locust rather than the caterpillar.

It literally means the devourer. In our version, however, it is uniformly rendered caterpillar as here (1 Kings 8:37; 2 Chron. 6:28; Isa. 33:4; Joel 1:4; 2:25).

It occurs nowhere else.

"And their labor unto the locust":

Which devoured the increase of the field.

All green grass and trees, all sorts of corn, wheat, barley and rye, and the increase of vineyards.

And all fruit trees, on which much labor had been used to manure and cultivate (see Rev. 9:3).

This was the eighth plague.

Psalm 78:47 "He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost."

Or "killed" them; for there is a vegetative life in plants.

This was the seventh plague of Egypt, attended with thunder and lightning, and was very terrible to Pharaoh (Exodus 9:23, compare Rev. 16:21).

"And their sycamore trees with frost":

Sycamore trees, according to Kimchi, were a sort of wild figs, and these with the vines are the only ones mentioned.

Though the plague of hail destroyed all sorts of trees; because there were many of these in Egypt, and are put for all others.

And who also observes, that the word rendered "frost", which is only used in this place, signifies a kind of hail.

And so Aben Ezra interprets it of great hailstones which beat off the fruit of the sycamore trees.

Psalm 78:48 " He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts."

For the hail fell upon man and beast, as well as upon herbs and trees (Exodus 9:22).

"And their flocks to hot thunderbolts":

Which were killed by them.

This is to be understood of the fire that was mingled with the hail, and ran upon the ground, and destroyed their flocks (Exodus 9:23).

All of these, as we said, were part of the ten plagues that came upon Egypt.

They plaques were sent by God to cause the Pharaoh to allow the children of Israel to go back to their homeland.

The number ten has to do with world government.

Cattle were specifically mentioned as one of the animals worshipped.

The plague on the cattle proved they were not gods.

Psalm 78:49 "He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels [among them]."

This with the following words, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, are thought by some to intend the other plagues, which are not particularly mentioned.

Or rather they express the manner in which they were all inflicted, in great wrath and hot displeasure for their sins and iniquities, and which particularly were shown.

"By sending evil angels among them":

Not evil in themselves, but because they were the instruments God made use of to bring evil things upon the Egyptians, as good angels often are.

Though some think that demons, devils, or wicked spirits, were sent among them at that time.

The darkness was over all the land, and frightened them.

This speaks of evil angels, but they were only evil to the Egyptians.

They were acting upon direct orders from God.

It was on the orders of God that the firstborn of every Egyptian family died in the tenth plague.

This was the climax of God's anger against Pharaoh.

Psalm 78 Continued Questions

1. What is the fire in verse 21?
2. What is the only way to heaven?
3. What does salvation by the cross seem like to the world?
4. Verse 25 calls the manna _____ food.
5. How often did the manna fall from heaven?
6. Who is the ruler of the wind?
7. Verse 27 says the flesh that rained was as _____.
8. Verse 29 says, He gave them their own _____.
9. How deep were the quail?
10. Why must a person be very careful what they ask for?
11. When did the wrath of God fall on them?
12. What happened to these people that God could not make understand?
13. What is the only way to get some people to respond to God?
14. Who was their Rock?
15. Why does the author believe we have wars and earthquakes?
16. The _____ of a man is what he really is?

17. What is Matthew 7:22-23 saying about those who are fakes?
18. God is _____ not willing that any should perish.
19. When did God send us a Savior?
20. What does verse 39 say that He remembered about man?
21. How often did they provoke Him?
22. What does it mean that God was limited in verse 41?
23. It is almost unbelievable to us that the Israelites forgot what?
24. Which sign in Egypt got them released?
25. What does idols mean?
26. What were their rivers turned into?
27. What god of the Egyptians did this discredit?
28. What does the number ten mean?
29. Who were these angels thought to be evil to?