

True Satisfaction

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[0 : 0 0] well i don't think anyone really enjoys being tested at all i know that some of you are waiting for exam results a big brown envelope to come through the post in august or a text message or an email however you get the results just to discover what your scottish exam results are now when i was training for ministry every monday morning we would have a new testament greek exam our lecturer called it a weekly quiz he thought it was a good idea nobody else thought it was a good idea at all but every monday at 9 a.m we would have this quiz test exam on our greek vocabulary and then we'd also try and translate some parts of the greek new testament into english and yet looking back painful monday mornings of being tested on greek was actually quite useful it helped us as a class learn some of the greek new testament indeed i think it was the best way for us to learn greek was the regular testing enabled us to grasp it we're being tested for our own good and so as we look at the book of exodus we've seen how it reveals to us the god who saves and exodus is the account of god saving his people israel from their slavery in egypt bringing them through the red sea and moving them towards the promised land but it doesn't just show us a history of what happened to the people of israel exodus also shows us the pattern of salvation in jesus christ it points us towards the greater exodus of god saving his people through the death and resurrection of jesus but exodus doesn't just give us the pattern of how we are saved it also shows us the pattern for the christian life because we see in the text today that israel's experience of living for god then is an example for us now and that's actually how the new testament understands the connection between what was going on with the people of israel and our experience today as the church as believers in jesus listen to what paul says in first corinthians chapter 10 he says these things happened to them the people in the exodus and were written down as sorry these things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us and so while the israelites had been saved they hadn't yet reached the promised land and so they went through this period of wilderness wandering for many many years and so in exodus chapter 15 verse 22 through to chapter 17 verse 7 we see how god tests his people so that his people will learn who he is and how they should trust him so their testing was for their own good their experiences were to teach them about god and why they should trust him and so are our experiences today the circumstances the situations we find ourselves in are wandering through the journey of life all of this is meant to teach us that we can trust the god who made us as we're going to look at three things this afternoon first of all we're going to look at a grumbling people secondly a gracious provision and thirdly a greater purpose a grumbling people a gracious provision and a greater purpose so first of all a grumbling people these verses the huge chunk that we're looking at tell the story of israel's grumbling against god so they go to three different locations you would have noticed and each time they grumble first they were without water second they were without food and then third they were without water again and they had just seen what god had done for them god had delivered them in the most amazing ways through the plagues and through the passover and through the parting of the red sea god had saved them he had rescued them he had soundly defeated their enemies they even sang a song of praise telling of all that god had done for them and yet at the first sight of difficulty despite all of these things what do they do well they start to grumble their grumble was directed at mooses and aaron their leaders but it was really against god and their grumbling was a sign of unbelief indicating their lack of trust in god and it's not that they weren't hungry or they weren't thirsty of course they were they needed food they needed water but the real problem wasn't their stomachs the real problem was their hearts they still didn't fully trust god to meet their needs and so when they go to mara chapter 15 where the water was bitter they lacked faith in god's ability to provide water that was fit to drink god used it as an occasion to test their faith and when they go to the desert of sin chapter 16 they grumbled by going on about how good the food was in egypt

and they could have all they wanted to eat and again god used it to test them to see if they would follow his instructions chapter 16 verse 3 and then the next location rephidim the camp there chapter 17 there was no water but instead of trusting god believing that well he provided in the past so he would provide now they grumbled again and so between being delivered from egypt and arriving in the promised land this was a time of testing for israel their deliverance didn't mean an easy life for them but it meant a life where they had to trust god and that's why their story is really a picture of the christian life because these things happen to them as examples and as warnings for us because if we are a believer if we follow jesus then we have also been delivered but we're not in heaven yet we live in a world where we face all kinds of challenges every single day and all of these challenges are tests to see whether we are going to trust god because the reality is we can be just as guilty as the same sin as israel we're also tempted to grumble about what's going on in our lives at the first sight of difficulty we can lack faith in god and his ability to meet our needs to provide for us to satisfy us and it's because we easily forget what god is like we easily forget what god has done for us in the past and so we can also respond to certain situations with this kind of ungrateful and immature attitude just like the israelites just like children often complain because they don't realize that their parents do actually know what is best for them and so parents will test their children for their own good because as parents we want our children to grow up towards maturity that's what god wants for his people but as mooses and aaron knew the real focus of the grumbling here isn't people or circumstances the real focus of the grumbling is god himself look at verse 16 chapter 16 verse 8 he has heard your grumbling against him who are we you're not grumbling against us but against the lord and so i think we need to be aware of this don't we because if we grumble if things don't seem as if they're going according to plan in our lives then it's not our circumstances we're really grumbling about we're actually grumbling against god who has ordained those those circumstances and if things aren't the way that we would like them to be we're actually complaining against the sovereign god as if god is messed up somehow as if god has taken his eye off the ball as if god has got it we're wandering through the wilderness we should never forget that god has a purpose god has a plan and god hasn't forgotten about us he's leading us through this and he wants us to trust him each and every step of the way and so that's our first point a grumbling people second point is a gracious provision what is remarkable in these chapters is that god provides for his people despite his people's grumbling and they grumble a lot four times in chapter 16 it says that god heard their grumbling verse 7 then verse 8 and verse 9 then verse 12 god heard all of their grumbling god's not deaf to the cries even of our hearts he knows what is going on and yet despite this what god does here is he graciously provides for his people so chapter 15 at marah the water was bitter god made it sweet then at elam chapter 15 verse 27 we read there were 12 springs and 70 palm trees and they camped there near the water god provided then they moved chapter 16 to the desert of sin there was no food but god fed them and then when they went to rephidim chapter 17 there was no water god gave them water from the rock and so at every stage of the journey the lesson is clear god provides for his people and god meets the needs of his people because he knows what he's doing he knows how to lead his people and he wants his people to trust him and so let's see this in chapter 16 then look at chapter 16 verse 4 then the lord said to mooses i will rain down bread from heaven for you the people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day in this way i will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions so god will rain down bread from heaven not just to fill their stomachs but to teach them about him so chapter 16 verse 11 and 12 the lord said to mooses i have heard the grumbling of the israelites tell them at twilight you will eat meat and in the morning you will be filled with bread then you will know that i am the lord your god so god would daily supply the food they needed to sustain them did somebody say just eat well because god here literally flies in their dinner at night time and then their bread in the morning so these hordes of quails small birds landed in the camp at night and then this bread kind of stuff came in the morning so verse 15 chapter 16 when the israelites saw it they said to each other what is it for they did not know what it was mooses said to them it is the bread the lord has given you to eat then verse 31 the people of israel called the bread manna it was like white it was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey but god didn't just provide for them here god also gave them specific instructions about how to collect the food and then how to eat the food to test them to see whether they would obey him and so they were to gather enough for that day unless it was the sabbath because the sabbath was a day of rest so they would find no food on that day verse 26 six days you are to

gather it but on the seventh day the sabbath there will not be any so god was going to give them what they needed but they still had to follow his instructions they to gather what they needed for that day and no more and so if they tried to hoard their food for the next day then it would rot and so some of them failed the test they were too greedy verse 20 says however some of them paid no attention to mooses they kept part of it until morning but it was full of maggots and began to smell so mooses was angry with them but then they were to gather twice as much on the sixth day so there would be enough for them for the sabbath the seventh day but some people failed that test too they didn't rest so verse 27 says nevertheless some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it but they found none so what god was doing every day was testing them to see whether they would trust him to give them their daily bread and they failed verse 28 then the lord said to mooses how long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions so god gave the israelites commands instructions to follow and isn't it the same for every single believer god is the one who saves us we don't contribute anything to our salvation we are saved by grace but when we are saved we obey god by keeping his commands and instructions and so this wasn't just about food for the israelites this wasn't a physical lesson it was a spiritual lesson they had to learn and mooses actually explains this later on in deuteronomy chapter 8 it's interesting deuteronomy chapter 8 verse 2 and 3 he says remember how the lord your god led you all the way in the wilderness these 40 years to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart whether or not you would keep his commands he humbled you causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna which neither you nor your ancestors had known to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the lord and so the manna was to teach the important spiritual lesson that they had to rely on god and trust god's word and of course it wasn't just a lesson for them it's a lesson for us too because we all need to learn to rely on god and on god's word to take god at his word to trust what he says and to know that he will give us what we need so as we apply it well perhaps we like to hoard our money maybe we like to store it up in stocks and shares and see the interest if so then it's a case of putting our trust in our money in our possessions in our wealth instead of trusting in god looking to our wealth for our security instead of god looking to it to provide what we need instead of looking to god another example is that well we may be too busy to take proper sabbath rest we think that our lives we think that our activities are so important that we couldn't possibly stop and come to church and worship god and we think well we've got a better rhythm for life than god so we don't need to listen to him and so what god is doing here with the manna is testing his people to see whether they would take god at his word and trust him because they need to do it all the way on their journey towards the promised land and that's why they had to keep some of the manna for generations to come so as the israelites journeyed through the wilderness just as we journey through life we need to look to god and trust his word and depend on him daily every day because god's generous provision of bread from heaven actually goes way beyond the israelites food in the desert god gives us bread from heaven too and the lord jesus christ jesus himself said in john chapter 6 it is not mooses who has given you the bread from heaven but it is my father who gives you the true bread from heaven for the bread of god is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world so jesus is talking about himself so he goes on to declare i am the bread of life whoever comes to me will never go hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty and so while exodus speaks of god's provision jesus comes on the scene and he says i'm god's provision i'm the one you need day by day and forever and so he says in john 6 i am the bread of life your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness yet they died but here is the bread that comes down from heaven which anyone may eat and not die i am the living bread that came down from heaven whoever eats this bread will live forever this bread is my flesh which i will give for the life of the world so jesus is saying that he came to give up his life and die so that he could give life to the world because it is in christ alone that god provides the ultimate life giving nourishment and that's why we need to take jesus deep into our lives just like the israelites had to go out to the camp pick up the manna put it in their mouth and eat it in order to be nourished so that they would live instead of die well so jesus christ is of no use to anyone unless we take him and believe in him because jesus is not only the bread of life he is also the water of life jesus said in john chapter 7 let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink whoever believes in me as scripture has said rivers of living water will flow from within them and jesus was talking about the holy spirit because all who believe in jesus receive the holy spirit and are satisfied as a jesus is saying here that he is the only provision in life that really and ultimately matters so he's saying that we need him for life now but we

need him for eternity we need him for eternal life and so we may have everything else in this [20:17] world everything that this world has to offer houses cars money but without jesus we have nothing and yet jesus is saying we can go to him and find satisfaction in every way it's interesting isn't it how people try and find satisfaction in life in so many different ways and in so many different things and jesus is saying here you will never find it you'll only find it in me and so he says in revelation come let the one who is thirsty come and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life it's on offer because god graciously has given us jesus so there's a grumbling people there's a gracious provision and then finally we see a greater purpose god's purpose in leading his people through the wilderness was to test their faithfulness would they follow his instructions and so the testing would teach them to trust god and keep his commands and that's the posture god wanted for his people to adopt as they made their way to the promised land and yet they miserably failed to trust and obey god some of them paid no attention and refused to keep god's commands and instructions and yet the same obedience is required of us today so this text is telling us the application of it is trust and obey but like the israelites we might try to trust and obey but we can't do it we fail even with our very best intentions and best efforts how do we fail to trust and obey well life happens doesn't it we lose our job money is tight family is a mess there's an unexpected diagnosis a loved one dies we're stressed out we fear for the future and so we doubt that god will actually provide for us in our need we imagine this can't be a test this is god's fault and all we can think about is just how terrible life is because god has surely led us into these circumstances and so as soon as things get difficult what do we do well we start to grumble and this obligation to trust and obey is just impossible to meet and so what do we do well the answer is here at the end of this passage because we see how god's gracious provision reveals god's greater purpose because something strange is going on as moses strikes the rock in chapter 17 and the water gushes out because there's an unusual reversal here because all along you'll notice that god is the one who has been testing his people but now we reach chapter 17 and it's not the people who are being tested anymore it's god who's being tested it's not even moses who is put on trial it is the lord who is put on trial so see what moses says chapter 17 verse 2 why do you put the lord to the test and then verse 7 and he called the place massa and meribah because the israelites quarreled and because they tested the lord saying is the lord among us or not and it's the language here of the law court as israel brings their charges against god so god is being charged with abandoning them and leaving them to die of thirst in the desert and so they're

basically accusing god of failing them as the israelites take on the role of judge where god is on trial where god is in the dock where god is in the place that they ought to be and see what god does it's interesting god willingly puts himself in the place of judgment god willingly steps into the dock and faces their accusations even though he's the judge so verse 5 and 6 chapter 17 the lord answered moses go out in front of the people take with you some of the elders of israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go I will stand there before you by the rock of Horeb strike the rock and the water will come out of it for the people to drink so moses did this in the sight of the elders of israel and something unusual is going on here because god would never stand before people people ought to stand before god but here god accepts the place of the accused god stands by the rock or on the rock and is identified with the rock and then he tells moses to strike the rock and water will flood out for the people to drink and so what's going on well moses striking the rock is a sign of judgment because remember the rod of moses represented the judgment of god remember the Nile turning into blood moses's rod but it's not the people who are judged for their sin their failure to trust and obey no god in identifying with the rock was willing to take the judgment the people deserved for their sin so they could live so god stood accused and god submitted himself to the blow of his own justice so the people wanted to know if god was among them or not and he proved that he was not just by providing them with water but by protecting them from judgment by bearing that judgment himself and so the rock at massa reveals god's greater purpose because in the new testament paul says that rock was christ he explains it first corinthians chapter 10 he says that the israelites all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them and that rock was christ so he says the rock was christ because like the rock in the desert jesus was struck with the blow of god's justice when he died on the cross so jesus bore the curse for our sin by swapping places with us he willingly stood accused and took our punishment he was struck with the rod of god's judgment so we can live so just as water gushed out of the rock in the desert so too the water of life flows out from the rock that

is christ jesus said whoever drinks the water i give them will never thirst indeed the water i give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life jesus is saying only he can truly satisfy us because he is the bread of life because he is the living water and that is god's greater purpose in the exodus god's provision of food and water for the israelites foreshadows what he would give to the world in jesus and because jesus is the ultimate embodiment of what it means to fully trust and obey god then when we repent of our sin and rejoice in what jesus has done for us only then can we cope with whatever happens to us in this life because even when we journey through the wilderness we never need to doubt god's goodness we never need to doubt god's provision daily we can trust that god will give us what we need because if he has already given us what we need most for life and in death in jesus then we can be sure god will never ever ever fail us as we make our journey towards the promised land of the new heaven and the new earth each and every day we can depend on god how do we know look back to jesus and see what he has done you