

Lesson 29 - CHRIST, THE BREAD OF LIFE *Exodus 16*

(Exod. 16:1-3) - As Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and toward Sinai, it became apparent that the people were totally dependent upon the Lord God for their physical survival. They found no water to drink in Shur, but God provided them water by His miraculous power in turning the bitter waters of Marah into sweet water. The Lord then led them to "*Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters*" (Exod. 15:27). Here, Moses is led of the Lord to bring the people from Elim to the "*wilderness of Sin,*" where they found no food. As usual, they complained against Moses and Aaron and, ultimately, against the Lord. Once again, we see the state of all lost, unbelieving people illustrated in the unbelief of the children of Israel. We are all by nature sinful and depraved people (Rom. 3:9-12). Just one month earlier they had seen great miracles from the Lord for their deliverance, but this did not change their hearts. Like them, by nature, we have no ability or will to believe, trust, and worship the Lord. If left to our own power and wills, we will not believe and trust the Lord. If salvation comes to us, it must be of the Lord, all conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ. Our only hope of salvation is to trust in the Lord and cast ourselves upon His mercy.

(Exod. 16:4-10) - In spite of their unbelief, God determined to provide "*bread from heaven*" for them. This was all due to God's promise, power, and for His glory. When Aaron spoke to the people "*the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.*"

(Exod. 16:11-15) - The Lord sent them quails and what came to be called "*MANNA,*" which literally means "What is it?". This manna was something they had never seen before. It was neither man-made nor touched by man. And notice that the Lord did not give them any options as if to say they could take it or leave it. He said, "*At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God.*" This is the way God brings His spiritual people (His elect) to salvation by His grace whereupon they feed upon Christ Who is the Bread of life (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:24-28; John 6:44-45). God graciously and powerfully gives us a hunger and thirst for Christ and makes us will to believe and trust Him. Like the manna in the wilderness was freely given to the Israelites ("*This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.*"), the Bread of life in salvation is freely given to God's people, all by His grace that reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Lord Himself stated clearly that this manna typified Himself as the Bread of life (John 6:31-35,48-58). Consider some of the ways this manna typified our Savior. (1) Manna was prepared in heaven and came down to earth. The people of Israel must have food. It was impossible for them to provide for themselves in the wilderness, so their bread was prepared in heaven and sent down to earth (Num. 11:9). Christ Jesus had a body prepared of the Father that He might be food for believers (Heb. 10:5). (2) In the wilderness of flesh and sin there is no food. All the nourishment Israel needed was found in the manna from heaven, and all that a believer needs is in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9-10). (3) Manna was a gift. It costs them nothing. All they needed to do was to gather it and eat it. Christ Jesus is the unspeakable gift of God's love (2 Cor. 9:15; Rom. 6:23). The bread of life, Christ Jesus, is free. That for which men labor never satisfies and, in the end, will cost them dearly (Isa. 55:1-3; John 6:27).

(4) Manna was provided for all who were hungry, and the manna met everyone's need (Exod. 16:16-18). All men, of whatever distinction, have one thing common - all have sinned, all have no righteousness, and all need Christ. He is the only Savior and the only bread (Matt. 11:28; John 6:53-54). (5) The Israelites gathered the manna daily, and the man who gathered

much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack. We feed on Christ daily. There is not a day without our feeding upon Him in His Word. He is sufficient for us every day. (6) Manna was pleasant to the taste. How sweet and satisfying is the Lord Jesus to those who taste Him by God-given faith (*Exod. 16:31; John 6:54-56*). His word is sweeter than the honeycomb (*Psalms 34:8*).

As in all types and pictures in the Old Testament, we must recognize that Christ is superior to the type. Everything that applies to the type cannot be applied to Christ. So, in many ways the manna in the wilderness does not picture Christ. Manna was food for the outward man only. Christ is the bread of life for the inward man. The manna was eaten by those who later died. We eat of Christ by God-given faith and never die. The manna rotted and decayed when kept. Christ ever lives! He abides the same yesterday, today, and forever. The manna was only found in the morning. Christ is our food morning, noon, and night. The manna ceased when they entered Canaan. Christ, our bread, is our bread forever. In glory He will be our eternal Bread, the subject of our song, the joy of our heart, and the object of our worship.

(Exod. 16:16-30) - The Lord gave specific instructions on when and how much of this manna was to be gathered so that each person had exactly what they needed without any left to spoil. In *verses 22-30* we have the first mention of the sabbath which is described in *verse 23* as *“the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD.”* The point is that not only do we need bread to sustain life, but we also need rest for our bodies. Like the manna, this blessed sabbath rest is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ and the boundless grace of God given to us in Him. Christ is our Bread for spiritual and eternal life, and He is our rest (our Sabbath) as we rest in Him from all our labors. We benefit eternally from HIS labors (*Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4:1-11*). But, again, as was common among them, many disobeyed the Lord. Some gathered more than needed, and it was corrupted with worms and became rotten. Others did not gather enough on Friday, sought to gather manna on the sabbath, and found none. The Lord rebuked them for their disobedience, and they obeyed the Lord - *“So the people rested on the seventh day.”*

(Exod. 16:31-36) - No one knows exactly what the manna was made of, but it is described here as being *“like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.”* *Numbers 11:7* states that manna’s appearance was like *“bdellium”* or *“resin.”* *Psalms 78:24* refers to manna as *“the corn of heaven,”* and *Psalms 78:25* calls it *“angels’ food.”* So, manna was literal bread that God caused to appear miraculously each morning during the Israelites’ wilderness wanderings. The miracle of manna ceased shortly after the Israelites entered the Promised Land (*Joshua 5:12*). But God commanded Moses and Aaron to fill a pot with one *“omer”* of manna to be kept in the holy of holies (to be made later) before the Ark of the Testimony (covenant) throughout their generations (*Heb. 9:4*). The Lord kept this manna within the Ark from spoiling.

In *Revelation 2:17* the Lord told the church of Pergamum, *“Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna ...”* The hidden manna is a symbolic picture of Jesus Christ. As the manna of the Exodus sustained and strengthened the Israelites for the forty years in the wilderness, so Jesus strengthens and sustains us spiritually as we walk through this life. Jesus is the *“manna”* from heaven—the spiritual sustenance we need—and it is promised to us. It is hidden from those who are in unbelief, wise and prudent in their own eyes (*Matt. 11:25*). It must be revealed to God’s children, and He must give them eyes to see this manna as well as a hunger for it. Only believers will reap the benefits of salvation. The unbelieving world that rejects Christ will never know the joy and satisfaction of faith in Him.